

Collector's  
Edition

# HOME theater

A CurtCo Freedom  
Publication

October 1996

## Special $\infty$ Anniversary $\infty$ Issue

**5 Big-Screen LCD Projectors Face Off**

The Newest Speaker System for Dolby Digital

Internet Surfing from Your La-Z-Boy

**Audiophile Accessories: Voodoo or Doo-doo?**

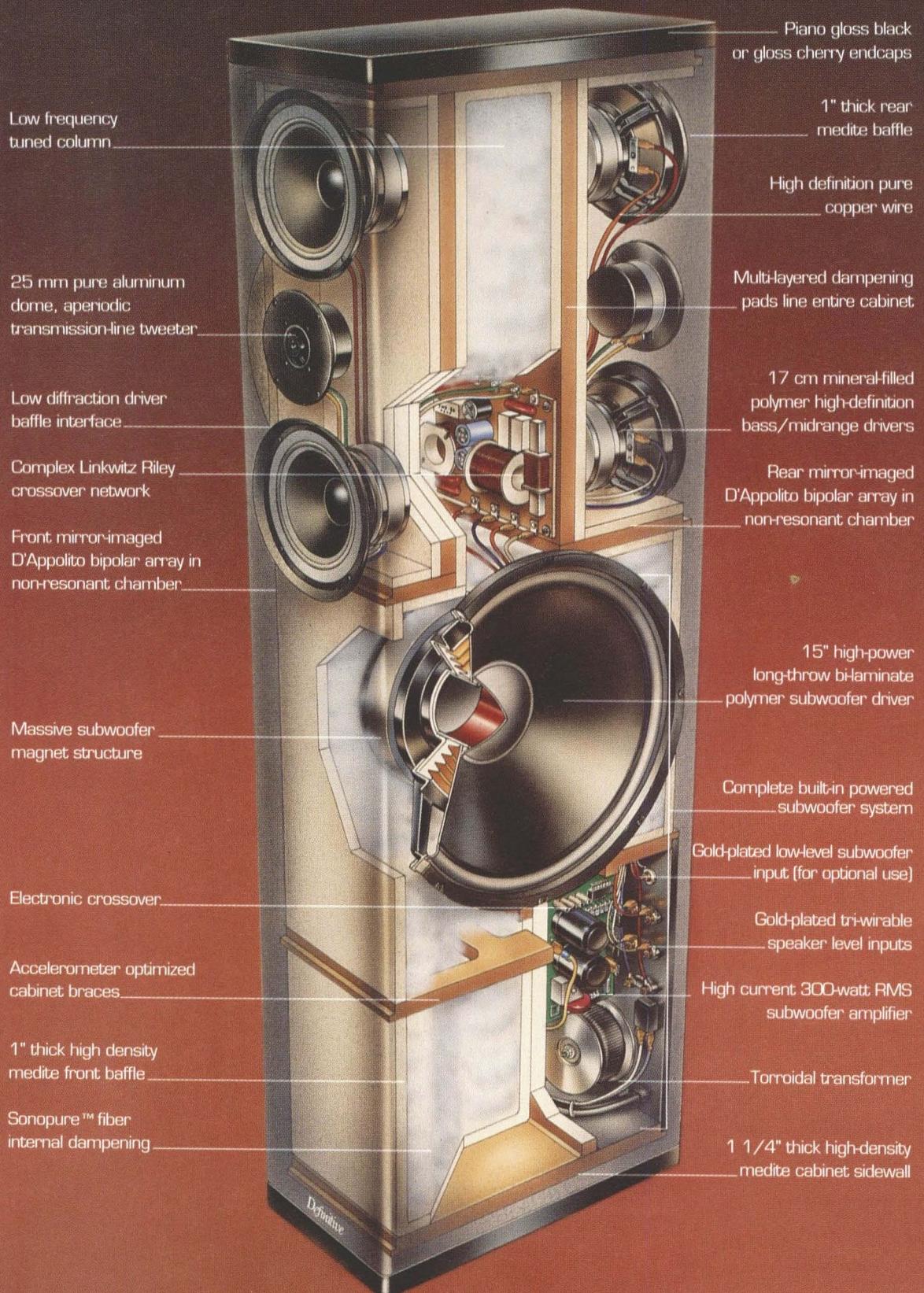
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## Inside Definitive's BP2000



"I doubt that you can get a better sounding system for less than several times the price of the BP2000."

-Julian Hirsch, *Stereo Review*

# “Definitive’s New BP2000 Absolutely Kills Most More-Expensive Speakers!”

—Brent Butterworth, *Home Theater Technology*

*“Astounding sound...a hands-down best buy...each speaker has a 15" powered subwoofer built-in...bipolar superspeaker...one of the easiest recommendations we've ever made.”*

—Brent Butterworth, *Home Theater Technology*

*“Frankly, if circumstances allowed, I would choose these speakers for myself.*

—Julian Hirsch, *Stereo Review*

## **Speaker of the Decade**

Now, with the BP2000, Definitive literally reinvents the loudspeaker. We have combined a six-driver dual D'Appolito bipolar array with a built-in (side-firing) 300-watt powered 15" subwoofer. (Yes, a complete powered subwoofer built into each speaker!) The result is extraordinary sonic performance beyond anything you've ever heard.

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# October Program



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Rebecca Day

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Frank Beacham

### 92 Back to Basics

With the release of *Video Essentials*, Joe Kane, creator of *A Video Standard*, attempts to spread his message to the masses.

Al Griffin

### 120 Do That Voodoo That You Do

Our "voodoo accessories" Face Off pits a half-dozen tweaks against an open-minded (but admittedly skeptical) panel.

Brent Butterworth

### 134 Something Wicked This Way Comes

Before there was *Friday the 13th*, John Carpenter was striking fear into the hearts of wayward teenagers the world over. Dan Yakir takes you through some of his best films, ranging from splatter to suspense.

Dan Yakir

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### 66 Budget Productions

The squeaky wheel gets the grease, so when we complained about wireless speakers, the mechanics came out in force.

Brent Butterworth



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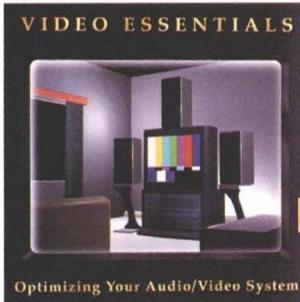
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Before you run out to buy some new exciting product you've seen featured within the pages of *HT*, find a quality dealer near you in our Dealer Locator.



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## Reviews

### 24 System of the Month

If you're always looking to get a few bucks off, or a little something extra, this system will give you both in spades.

Atlantic Technology  
System 250.1 Speakers  
Dwin HD-500  
Front Projector  
Dwin LD-2  
Line Doubler  
Marantz SR-96  
A/V Receiver

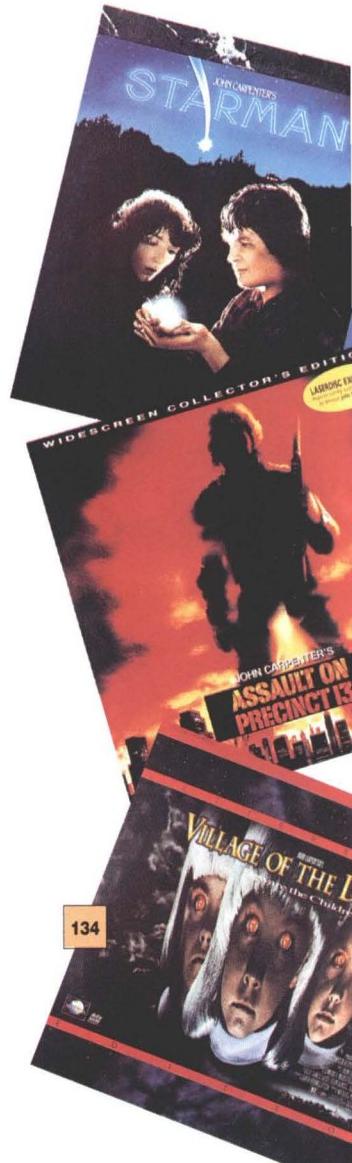
### 48 Gear Guide

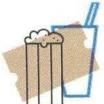
The DISH Network  
Direct-Broadcast  
Satellite System  
ADA Millennium  
Multiroom System  
Toshiba M-782  
Hi-Fi VHS VCR  
Legend Audio  
Model 4000 In-Walls

### 102 Face Off: LCD Projectors

Dig the heavy vibes our editors lay down about the grooviness of these five LCD projectors, man.

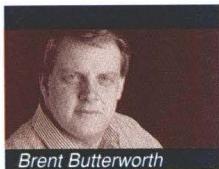
Ampro LCD-100  
Runco LCP-500  
Sanyo PLC-700M  
Sharp XV-S95U  
Sharp XV-H37U





# Can't Sit Still

Sorry, we can't stand to do the same old thing for long. So here's a few of the changes we've made for our second anniversary.



Brent Butterworth

There's a famous French phrase, "Plus ça change," which means "Nothing changes." Well, it doesn't apply at *Home Theater*, where "Tout le monde ça changes" is the rule. As best I can recall from high school French class, that's how to say "Everything changes."

We've never been content to stick with a formula, because 1) we have short attention spans, and 2) this industry changes fast: What was important last year bores us this year, and what's important this year we'd never heard of last year. So we've taken a hard look at every aspect of this magazine, thrown out some oldy-moldy stuff, and made some major changes to both improve the quality of our stories and to make them reflect the changes that have taken place in the industry since our first anniversary last October.

The biggest change astute *HT* readers will notice is that we've modified our System Review format. We couldn't find a good reason to continue throwing VCRs and laserdisc players into the systems we review; these devices work pretty much the same no matter what system you put them in. (Also, we've practically run out of LD players to review!) We decided to concentrate on the key components of a system: speakers, audio electronics, and video monitors. We're also fine-tuning our ratings scales and methods to make them more informative and entertaining, and adding a new "Head to Head" column so that our editors and writers can voice dissenting opinions.

You'll notice some more subtle changes we've made to our columns and our software reviews, plus one very big change on our masthead: the addition of Brian Clark as associate editor. After two years as reviews editor of *Digital Video* magazine, and a few years at *Video* magazine before that, Brian knows well how to figure out what you, the reader, need to know about electronics products. He also brings a sense of humor to his work that we've been enjoying tremendously, and that you too will get to experience starting in this issue.

Visit our new and improved Web site at <http://www.hometheatertech.com>. Or see our stuff on America Online in the Gadget Guru's Forum, keyword: Gadget.

# HOME Theater

October 1996  
Volume 3/Number 10

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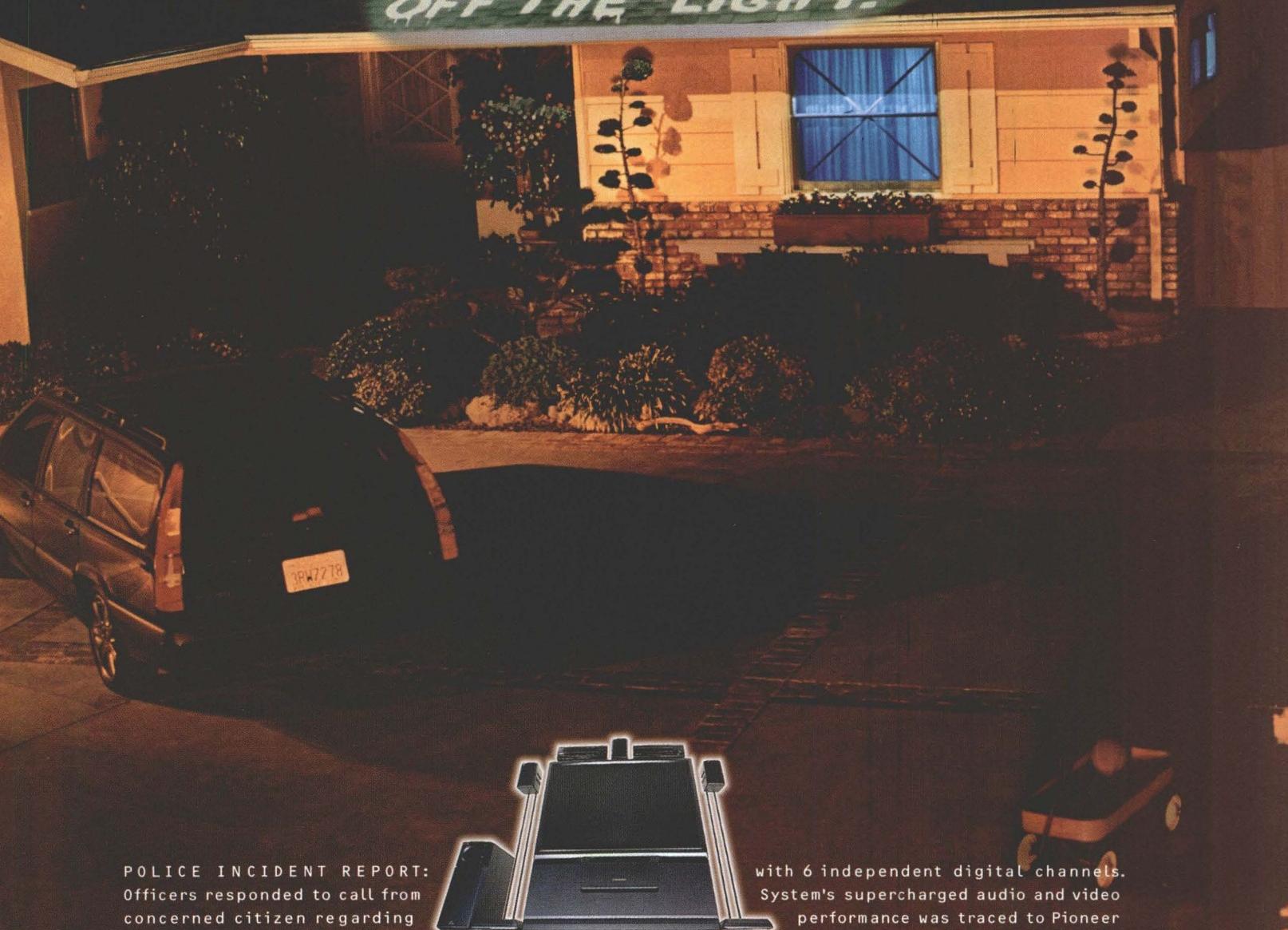
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System projection monitor identified as source of razor-sharp visuals. Officers then concluded Pioneer Advanced HomeTheater System equal to or better than movie theater experience. END OF REPORT. Call 1-800-PIONEER for a dealer near you. Pioneer Advanced HomeTheater. You're surrounded.

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*- D.B. Keele, Jr., on the Studio/100  
Audio Magazine/July '96*

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*- Andrew Marshall, on the Studio/80•CC-450•ADP-450  
Audio Ideas Guide, Summer 96 Issue*

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# Coming Attractions

Here are a few of the newest audio/video goodies that make home theater so entertaining.

**PANASONIC**  
The future is here—or at least imminent. Although there's no sign yet of DVD software, manufacturers are already hard at work on the players. Panasonic recently joined the fray with

the announcement that its two players, the DVD-A100 and step-up model DVD-A300, will be available sometime this fall at prices yet to be determined. Panasonic  
(201) 348-7000  
**Circle Reader Service No. 504**



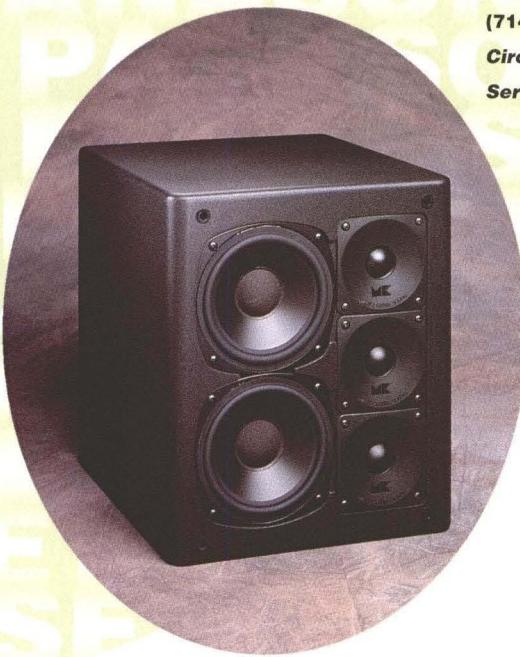
**M&K**  
With sound this good, no self-respecting audio-phile's home would be complete without M&K's S-150 speakers (\$750). Packaged in a shorter 12.5-inch cabinet, the THX-certified S-150 is compact enough to fit on a bookshelf, but still delivers the

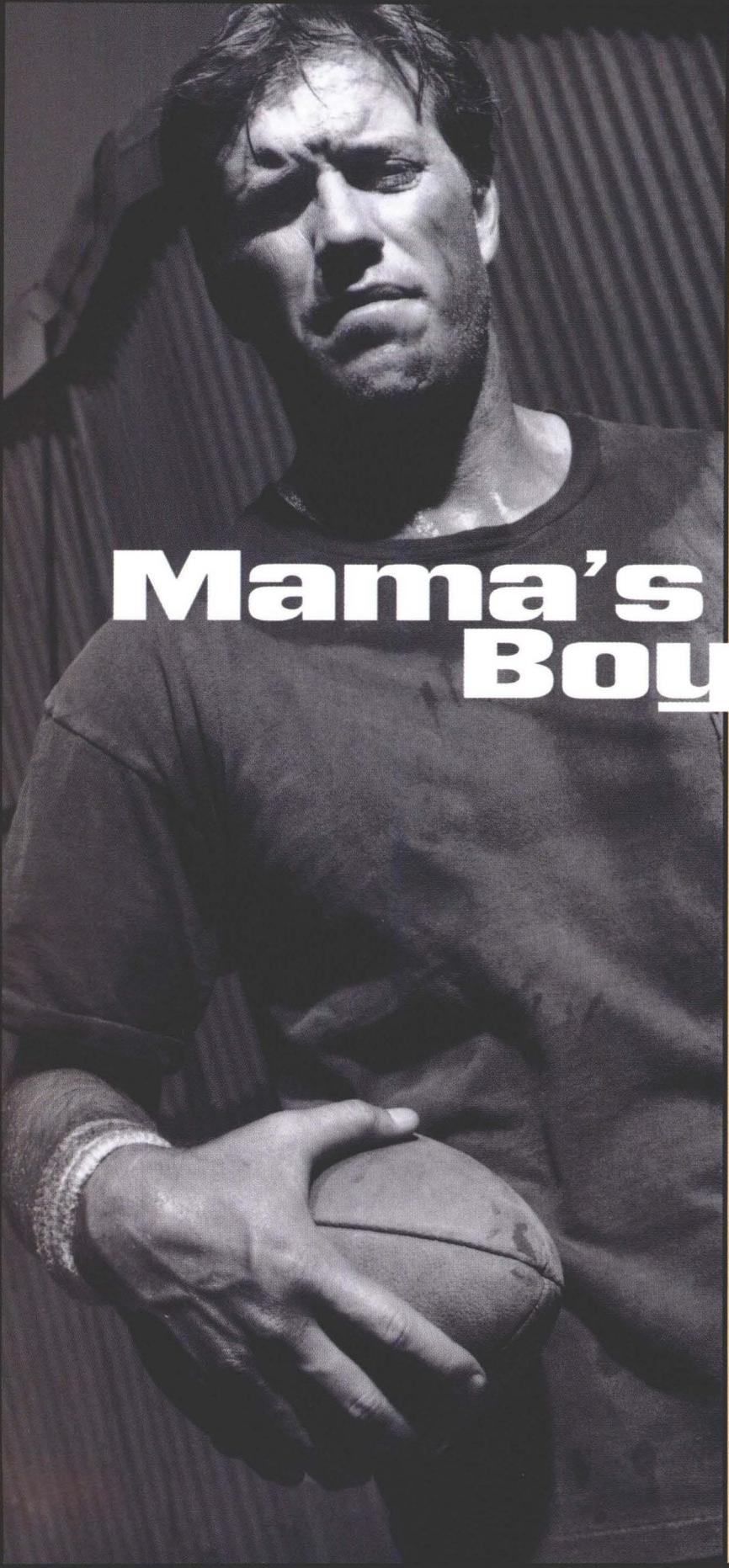
great sound you'd expect from larger speakers—plus, it's already toed-in for better imaging. What's more, it comes in a squared front baffle center channel and an angled center version designed for rear-projection TVs. Miller & Kreisel Sound Corp. (310) 204-2854  
**Circle Reader Service No. 503**



**DIAMOND CASE**  
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Plus 500-2 (\$3,000). Available in three styles and 30 wood finishes, Visalia can meet even the most demanding storage needs. And it can hold any size television you throw at it. Diamond Case Designs (714) 528-5286  
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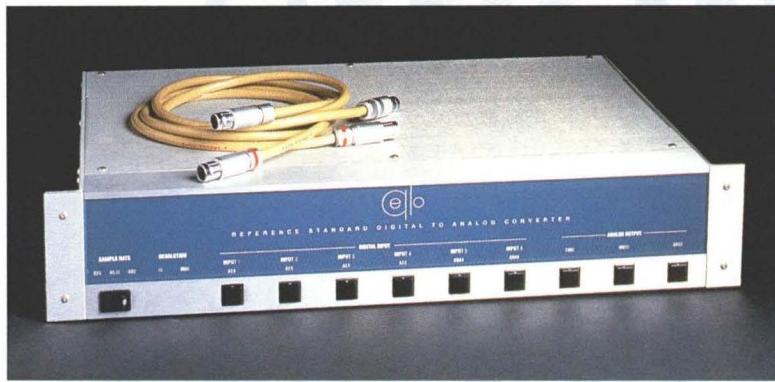
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**CELLO**

Just when you thought you'd never find the perfect acoustic accouterment for those funky platforms that are all the rage this season, along comes Cello. With their Reference Digital-to-Analog



**Converter (\$12,000),** you'll make as much of a statement in your living room as those platforms will on the dance floor. The R-DAC features four AES/EBU and two coaxial inputs, with outputs via balanced Fischer connectors and single-ended RCA, plus an onboard UV-22 system. **Cello Ltd.** (212) 472-5016 **Circle Reader Service No. 502**

**LOVAN**

You've got a bunch of equipment in different sizes, and Lovan's got a rack somewhere to fit it all. The modular Sovereign Series consists of the AVR

(\$659), which has two 7-inch shelves; the Hi-Fi (\$479), which comes with four 7-inch shelves; the T Hi-Fi (\$549), featuring four 10-inch shelves; and the single-shelved Amp Stand (\$129). All have Lovan's vibration-reducing "trisolation" system and a Durian scratch-resistant finish.

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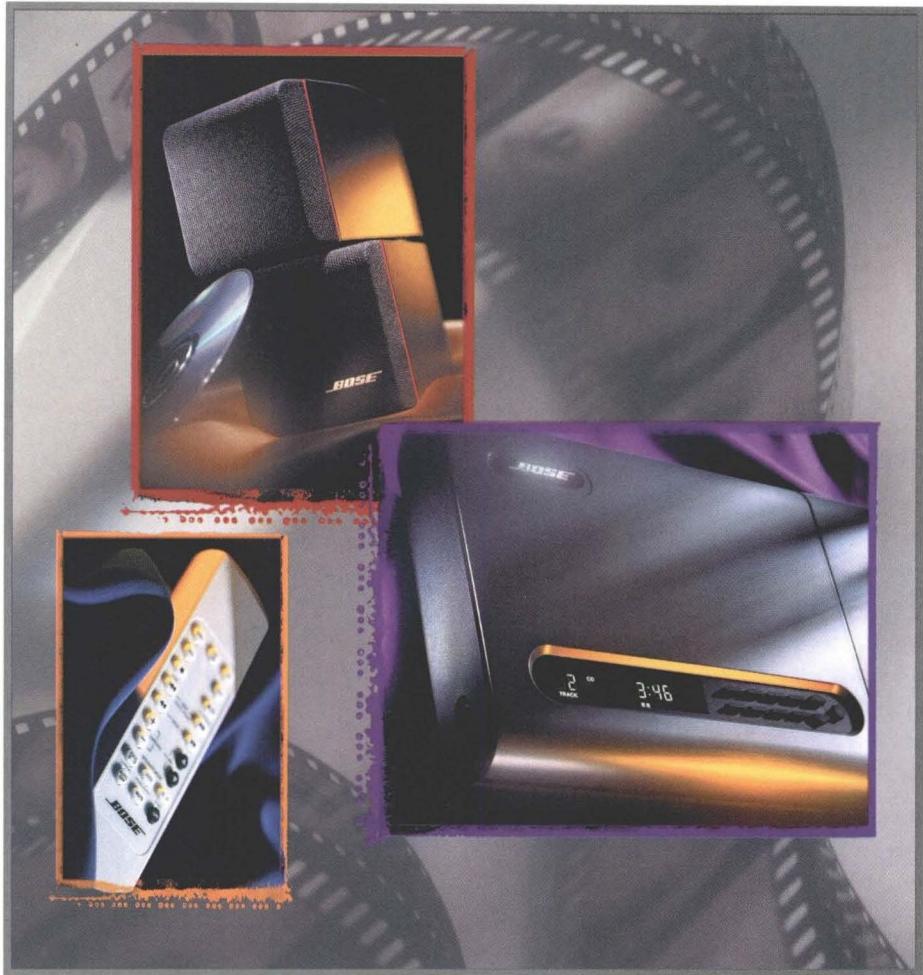
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If you're not already listening to Acoustimass speakers, you're just not hearing everything you could.



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## Step up to a new experience in home theater.

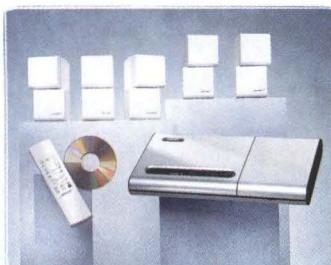
[Your eyes won't believe your ears.]

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be adjusted to compensate for each particular acoustical challenge. The R/EQ-150 is 8.5 inches wide and 2 inches tall, and has five half-octave wide bands with a +8dB boost.

Parasound Products, Inc.  
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▼ **EAD**  
They get it. The folks at EAD know you want DTS and they're planning to be one of the first to bring it to you. Their

trailblazing AC-3 component, the TheaterMaster audiophile D/A converter/surround sound processor, should be the first to feature DTS. And if you've already got one, don't fret—existing Theater-Masters will be upgradeable. Like the technology, pricing is coming soon. **Enlightened Audio Designs** (515) 472-4312 *Circle Reader* **Service No. 501**



◀ **BILLY BAGS**  
It's not the New York skyline reproduced in mirrors—it's The City CD towers from Billy Bags. Just because you love movies like we do doesn't mean that you don't have a truckload of CDs taking up just as

much space in your home theater as laserdisks. Don't ignore them, put them in something more interesting than a bookshelf. Sold modularly, the individual towers range in price from \$50 to \$200. **Billy Bags** (805) 644-2185 *Circle Reader* **Service No. 508**



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# Premiere Designs

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**Samsung's space-age GXE1395 personal video game TV is the perfect solution for the 40 million U.S. households and the 80**

**million glazed-over eyeballs lurking within. A 13-inch CRT is flanked by two bass-reflex speaker "wings," adjustable for pinpoint stereo accuracy, and topped by a powered subwoofer, liable to set delicate digestive systems in motion. Multiple stereo surround modes like "warzone" and "roadrace" bring the thrill of calamity to even the most jaded juvenile delinquent. Of course, a full array of audio and video inputs make**

**this a full-featured set, which doubles as a superb 13-inch stereo TV receiver for those who haven't had the urge to pick up a joystick since Ms. Pac Man cleaned their clock at the local singles bar back in 1985.**

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# Premiere Designs

A well-kept secret from the land of  
sausage stands and puff pastry.





**There's nothing better than eating a good prune danish, unless of course you're listening to a Jamo loudspeaker at the same time. Europe's leading speaker manufacturer has hit our shores with a bounty of models sufficiently unique that they could only have come from a culture inventive enough to put horns on a metal helmet. Like the Little Mermaid herself, the Jamo 707i speakers are**

**sturdy yet seductive, though unlike the 'maid, these speaks**

**are substantially clothed in rich mahogany and glossy glass tops.**

**Beautiful curves to the cabinet's side make this speaker an interior designer's dream, but don't be fooled by looks alone—the sexy lines solve problems with standing waves and serve to minimize room-boundary reflections.**

**The 707i is a three-way system that uses only the best proprietary drivers, bandpass filters, and cabinet construction. Jamo's special push-pull coupled cavity system is a finely tuned bass reflex port that delivers deeper bass**

**with greater efficiency than conventional designs.**

**The Jamos may turn your neighbors green with envy, but they're "green conscious," too. Waterbased paints, non-freon gases, biodegradable plastics, and recycled paper cartons are all a part of the Jamo philosophy—along with great sound.**

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Noel Lee—the Head Monster and President, Monster Cable Products, Inc., is a pioneer in cable technology and a dedicated audiophile. Noel is also an authority on cables and how they impact A/V systems. Monster Cable's patented technologies make it #1 in the cable industry.



# MONSTER® CONNECTIONS

by Noel Lee

## Revolutionary New Cables Maximize DVD Performance

The home theater industry's abuzz with talk about the coming introduction of DVD, or Digital Versatile Disc. Why the excitement? Because DVD's a great technological leap over the laserdiscs and VHS tapes we watch today. It'll produce the sharpest pictures you've ever seen, complete with digital surround sound. And Monster Cable is working with the leaders in DVD technology to create a whole new line of video cables specially designed to carry DVD's incredible sound and picture.

DVD uses a convenient, CD-sized disc that doesn't wear out, and that lets you access individual scenes in a movie instantly, without having to fast-forward or rewind. These new discs hold so much more information—up to about 25 times what you can fit on a CD—that they can even carry movie soundtracks in several different languages.

This new format will place unprecedented demands on the video cables you use with it. The best of the new DVD players will have component video outputs, which

carry the red, green, and blue components of the video separately. Many manufacturers will introduce TVs with matching component-video inputs. The combination of the DVD player and the new TV will give you a progressive-scan picture that approaches the quality of high-definition television (HDTV).

Toshiba has been the real pioneer in DVD, having developed much of the technology used in the new format. The company has chosen Monster Cable as the manufacturer of a new component video cable to connect the new DVD players with the new TVs. Although the standard for this cable hasn't been set in stone, the current design combines three coaxial video cables, each terminated with an RCA connector. Other manufacturers are expected to follow Toshiba's lead. Whatever standard is finally set, Monster will be ready with the new cable when the players are introduced.

Monster video cables are already the best you can buy—they're the only ones certified by the Imaging

Science Foundation, an organization that trains video technicians and works with manufacturers to give consumers the best possible video quality. The ISF's Joel Silver reports that DVD will place unprecedented demands on a video cable. "DVD will have more true resolution than any consumer format we've seen before," he says, "so all the real

picture information will be transmitted to the video monitor. This means that for the first time, with the right video cable, you should not artificially add edge enhancement with the sharpness control on your TV or monitor." So even if you don't choose component-video-equipped hardware, you'll still need the best video cable for your DVD player.

If you use your DVD player's composite video output, we recommend our two ISF-certified composite cables, Monster Video® 3 (MV3) and M1000v Silver Video®, for the best possible picture. You'll probably get an even better picture, though, if you use S-video cable, which carries the brightness and color parts of the video signal separately. Because DVD's all-digital, its S-video signal is very clean, and using our top S-video cables, Monster Super Video 3 (MVS3) and M1000sv, will ensure that it stays that way as it travels from your player to your TV. We also offer a full line of digital coaxial and fiber-optic cables to carry the Dolby Digital surround sound signal that DVD provides, and our Bandwidth Balanced® audio interconnect cables if you prefer to use your DVD player's analog audio outputs.

Even if you're the first one on your block to buy a DVD player, you can count on Monster to provide high-performance cable for all of your DVD connections.

For more information about Monster Cable® products, call (415) 871-6000 or call your nearest Monster Cable dealer.

**Imaging Science**  
FOUNDATION, INC



Monster's new DVD component video cable features a three-coaxial-cable design with patented Turbine Design® RCA connectors.

# Killer Picture.



# Killer Cable.



If you want the most realistic picture possible, you need killer video cable by Monster Cable®.

Our ultra-high performance composite, S-video and RGB video cables feature advanced Monster video technologies to give you the kind of picture that makes home theatre exciting... Redder blood. Bluer oceans. Blacker nights. In fact, with MonsterVideo®, you don't just watch movies, you become part of them.

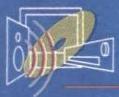
Our killer video cables feature precision 75Ω impedance, extended bandwidth, patented 24k gold contact connectors for

the highest integrity signal transfer, ultra-high density double shielding for maximum rejection of interference, and our unique Nitrogen-injected dielectrics—all for the best possible picture. What's more, these cables are so good that even our S-video cables maintain their performance over long lengths—up to 300 feet—something some industry "experts" say can't be done.

So visit your nearest dealer and experience what advanced Monster video cable technology can do to your picture. And don't forget to bring your bullet-proof vest.

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System of the Month

**"Only a sucker pays  
retail," they say.  
And we couldn't  
agree more. If you're  
always looking to  
get a few bucks  
off, or a little some-  
thing extra, this  
system will give you  
both in spades.**

*by Brent Butterworth*

# WHY PAY MORE?!



It's a great thing to bite the bullet, whip out the wallet, and spend big bucks for the home theater system of your dreams. At least, we've heard it's a great thing. We've never done it. All of us here at *Home Theater* magazine always

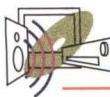
ATLANTIC TECHNOLOGY  
SYSTEM 250.1 SPEAKERS

DWIN HD-500  
PROJECTOR

DWIN LD-2  
LINE DOUBLER

MARANTZ SR-96  
A/V RECEIVER





## System of the Month

look for a deal. We go for the gear that's maybe a small step down in quality, but a giant leap down in price. Or we seek out a component that throws in some cool extras for about the same price. Hey, we actually shop at those places that blanket the airwaves with ads promising they'll "Save!!! You!!! MONEEEEEY!!!" If we could stand the crowds at Ted Nugent concerts in the '70s, we can surely handle a Saturday afternoon mob of polyester-shrouded moms yelling, "NO!!! I'm not buying you the Power Rangers Instruments of Death Kung Fu Play Set!!!" We didn't actually hit the Kmart to seek out this issue's System of the Month. But the components we feature here are every bit as much a bargain as 10-rolls-for-a-buck toilet paper—and they'll last you a lot longer, too.

We started with Atlantic Technology's System 250.1, a modestly priced speaker system designed

**We didn't hit the Kmart to seek out this issue's system, but the components we feature here are every bit as much a bargain as 10-rolls-for-a-buck toilet paper.**

to handle the demands of Dolby Digital sound. Atlantic's always had a rep for building inexpensive speakers that sound really good, from their original, teensy-tiny Pattern 200 system (the first cube-speaker system we heard that we actually liked), all the way to their \$3,500 System 350 THX speaker system. The System 250.1 shoots more for the mainstream hi-fi buyer, the guy who can spend more than a grand for his speaks,

but can't go past two. Atlantic's System 250 did very well as it was, but Atlantic decided to outdo itself and completely redesign the system. We were pretty sure the new system could edge out the old, but we weren't sure if it could kill it. Read on and find out.

To power the System 250.1, we asked Marantz to send us the SR-96 receiver, an up-to-date model that's THX-certified and compatible with Dolby Digital adapters (like Marantz's own DP-870, which we reviewed in the last issue). The SR-96 costs dearly at \$1,599, but you get something really great thrown in for free: Marantz's RC-2000 programmable system remote. The RC-2000 lists for \$250, but Marantz added only \$100 to the SR-96's price when they started including the fancy new remote a couple of months ago. (Unfortunately, Marantz didn't send us the new remote in time, so look for a full review of the RC-2000 in the November *HT*) Can a \$1,599 receiver really be a

bargain? Our new associate editor, Brian Clark, will lay it on the line for you.

Last, senior editor Al Griffin will take you on a tour of this

year's biggest bargain (so far) in front-projection TV: the new Dwin HD-500. At \$12,000, this projector doesn't appear cheap except by Bill Gates's standards. But a look at the numbers tells you otherwise. The HD-500 offers a maximum scan rate of 65 kilohertz, which means it scans fast enough to accommodate not only a line doubler, but a line quadrupler! It'll also work just fine with any new HDTV format that comes along—if one ever comes along.

Even more importantly, it can handle the progressive-scan signal from a DVD player—if one ever comes along. And it'll also do a great job of displaying video from practically any computer. Dwin designed the projector just for home theater; there's no noisy fan, and the chassis is small enough to practically disappear in your living room. Al checks out the HD-500 and Dwin's \$3,500 LD-2 line doubler in the pages to come.

You may notice we've changed our System Review format. We've done two things. First, we got rid of source devices, like VCRs, LD players, and DSS receivers. Why? Because we felt that reading a review of another me-too VCR every month might be boring you. And we've only got a couple of laserdisc players left to review this year, anyway! We'll be moving the reviews of these products into our new, free-wheeling Gear Guide, where you'll find reviews of practically anything and everything having to do with home theater.

Second, we've boiled down the System of the Month to the primary components: the speakers, the audio electronics, and the video monitor. We've wrapped the reviews into one long section, so that we'd present the products as a system, not just a pile of disassociated gear. And this way, we'll be able to write as much as we need to about a particular product, without having to cut reviews down to fit the pages.

We hope you dig the new format; drop us a line at our Malibu office and tell us what you think. ☺

# DVD Is Where It's At.



## Toshiba Is Where It's From.



If you've been reading about DVD, you've seen a lot of references to Toshiba. That's no coincidence. Toshiba led the way in developing DVD technology. Technology that includes a component video signal, which means a picture better than laser disc, and three times better than VHS. Six discrete channels of Dolby® AC-3® digital surround sound and up to eight languages. Multiple aspect ratios (16:9, letterbox, pan and scan).

And the versatility of multiple subtitles, camera angles and rating edits. All on one disc. So, if you enjoy being on the leading edge of home entertainment technology, you know that DVD is where it's at.

When you're ready to experience the brilliant picture and the extraordinary sound that DVD delivers, won't it make sense to get the technology from its source? Toshiba is the source of DVD technology. And DVD is the future.

For more information on Toshiba DVD, call 1-800-631-3811.

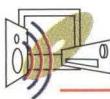
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## System of the Month

### Atlantic Technology

#### System 250.1

Those who are *really* into home theater (probably too far into it for their own good) might realize that this magazine and Atlantic Technology's System 250 are the same age: both are two years old this month. You might even remember that we reviewed System 250 in our second issue, back in November 1994. So why are we reviewing the same system all over again? Because *it ain't the same system.*

The new one's called System 250.1, borrowing from the "version" style of product naming that seems to work so well for the computer industry. But while the computer guys use a "point-something" name to indicate a product that's just like the old one except that they've fixed a couple of the bugs and introduced a couple of useless (and probably buggy) new features, Atlantic's using it to indicate a complete rebuild. It's really worthy of being called something like System 260.

I actually *scooped* this magazine when I wrote the very first review of System 250 for a different magazine (maybe that's why I got hired here). In that review, I raved that the system still sounded clean when played very loud, and

- A. Brent likes the fact that Atlantic's 254.1SR dipoles don't call attention to themselves.
- B. The 251.1LR speakers have sturdier cabinets and the woofers have larger magnets.
- C. Midrange and treble controls on the back of the 253.1C allow you to match it to the sound of speakers from different manufacturers.
- D. The 262PBM gave Brent a nice Hawaiian Punch.

that the slight treble roll-off Atlantic employed in the center speaker kept the voices sounding natural while making the overall sound of the system more spacious. I liked the music sound—it bested four comparably priced speakers I compared it to—but found a slight edge in the midrange that kept me from spewing superlatives.

Atlantic decided to fix this problem (and some I never even noticed) with major mods to every speaker in the system. The \$369/pair 251.1LR main speakers have much sturdier cabinets to minimize vibration, and while the woofers still measure 4 inches, they have *much* larger magnets for lower distortion and better power handling, and the woofers have a longer throw for better low-frequency response. The tweeter's the same, but it's now surrounded by a thin foam ring that keeps high-frequency sound from reflecting off the front baffle.

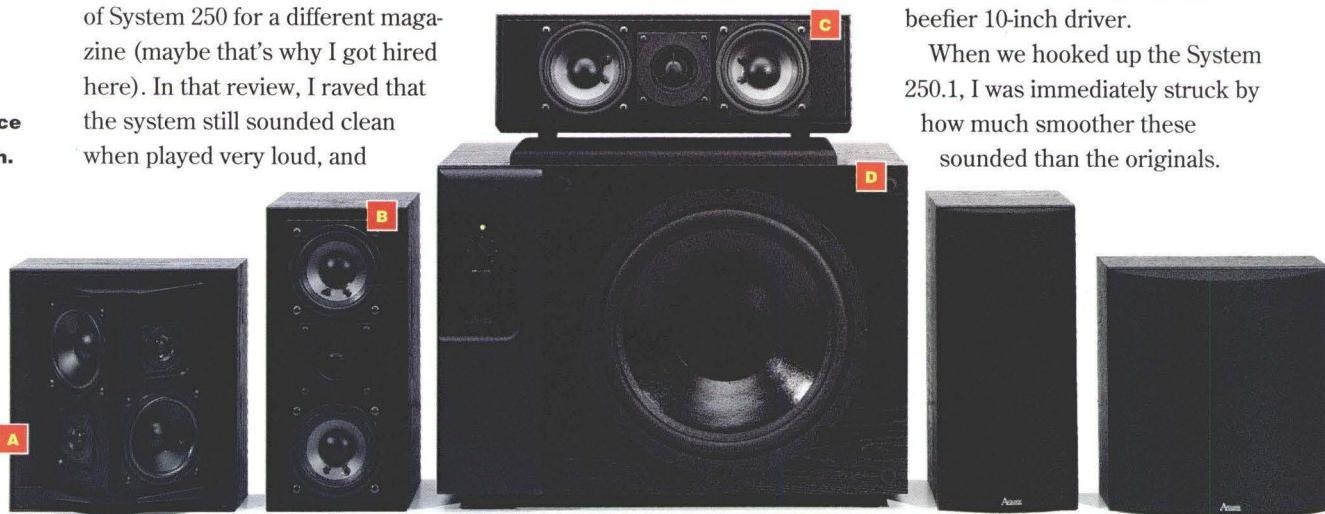
The \$319 253.1C center speaker underwent a similar mod; it uses the same drivers as the 251.1LR, but it has midrange and treble controls on the back that let you

approximately match the sound of other manufacturers' speakers. It also comes with a unique stand that lets the speaker pivot vertically, so you can get the speaker pointing right at you without shimming under it. This center speaker has a very low profile, which makes it easier to slip right underneath the screen of the Dwin projector. If you mount a projector on the floor, it will often partially block the center speaker; the 253.1C's slim enough that this shouldn't be a problem.

The original 254SR surround speaker used a single woofer and two midrange/tweeter drivers in a THX-type dipole configuration; the new \$399/pair 254.1SR uses a complete two-way design, with a 4-inch woofer and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch tweeter on each side of the speaker. Like the original, the 254.1SR's available in black or white, and can be mounted on a stand, on the wall, or partially set into the wall.

Let's not forget the sub: The new \$649 262PBM subwoofer uses a much larger amp (150 watts versus 90 for the original), and a beefier 10-inch driver.

When we hooked up the System 250.1, I was immediately struck by how much smoother these sounded than the originals.



# Laserdisc

*F*OR 18 YEARS, IT HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE THE BAROMETER BY WHICH ALL OTHER VIDEO FORMATS ARE MEASURED.

*T*HERE IS NO BETTER WAY TO VIEW MOVIES IN YOUR HOME. NONE.

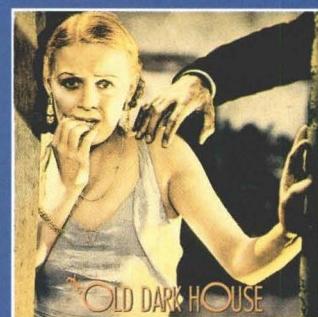
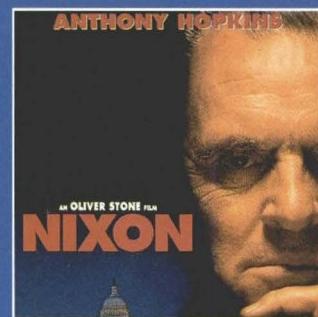
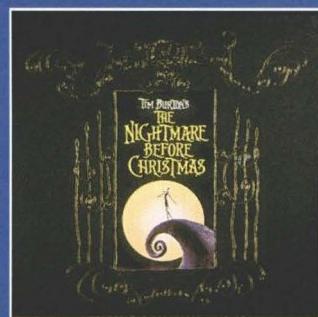
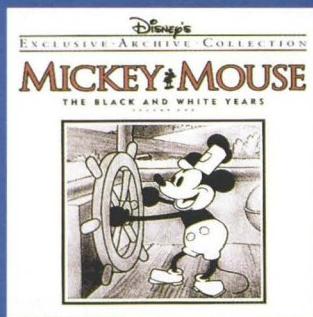
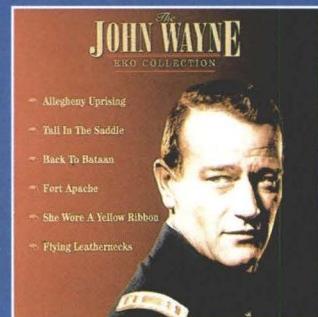
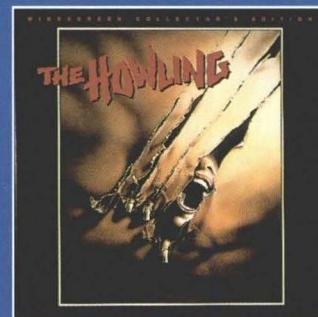
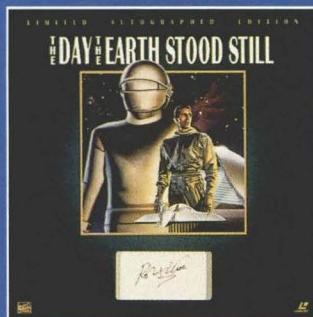
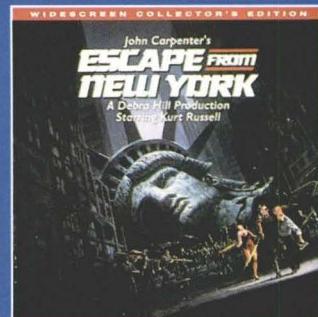
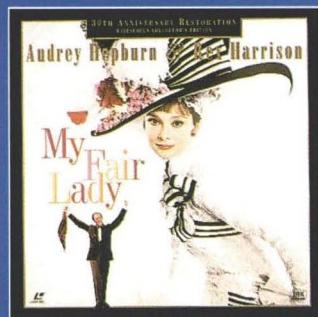
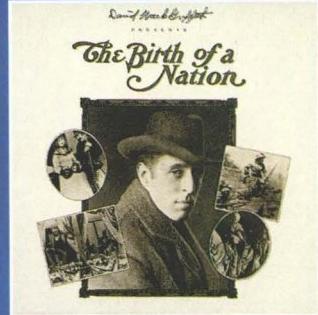
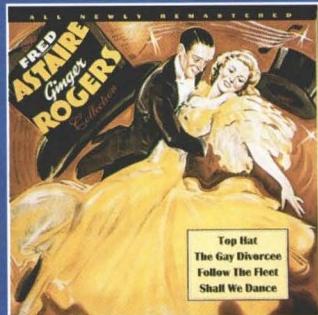
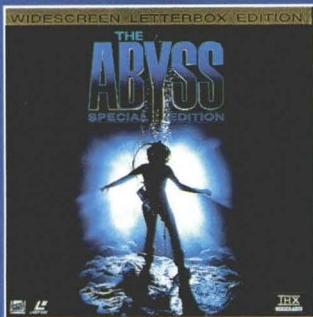
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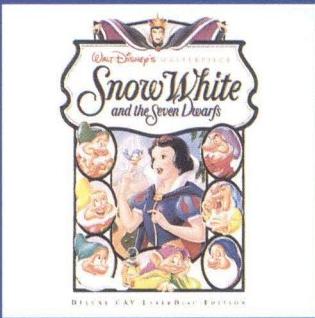
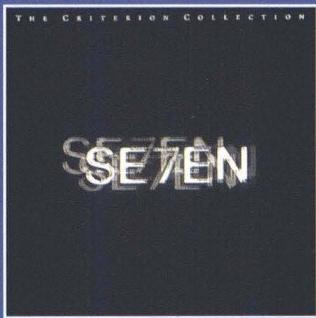
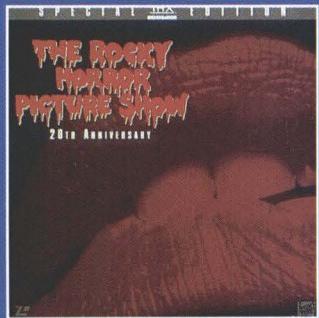
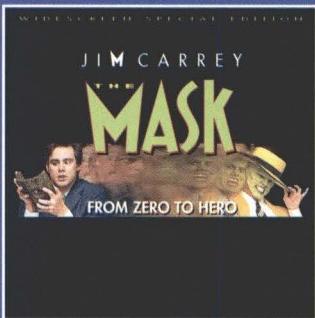
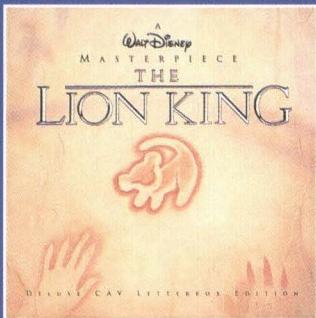
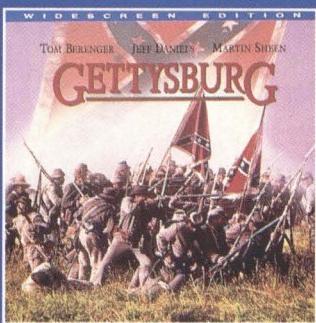
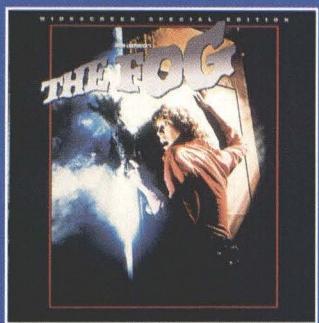
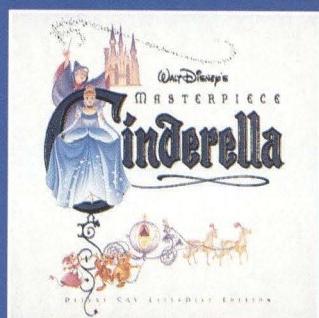
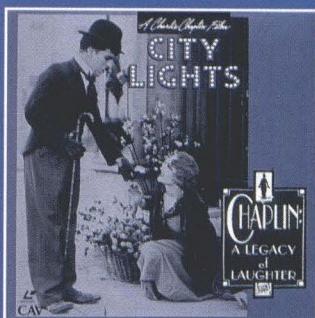
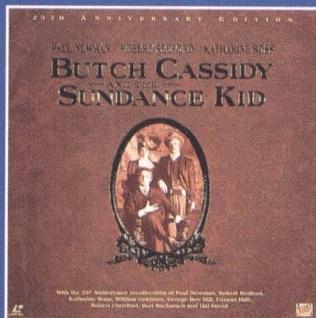
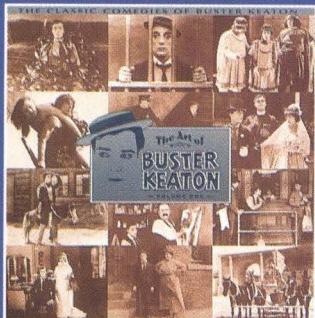
*T*AKE A LOOK AT JUST A SAMPLING...

# A BSOLUTELY EVERYTHING

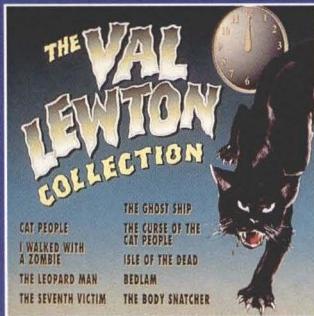
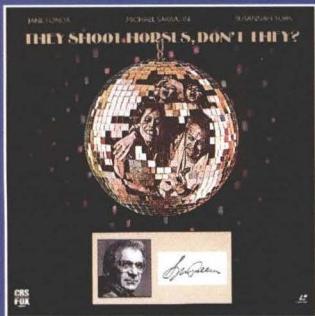
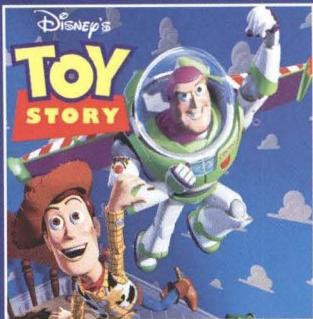
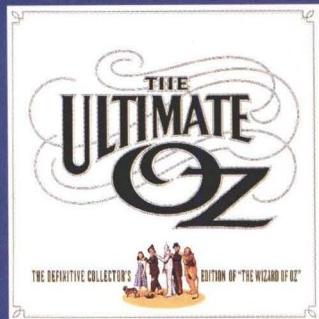
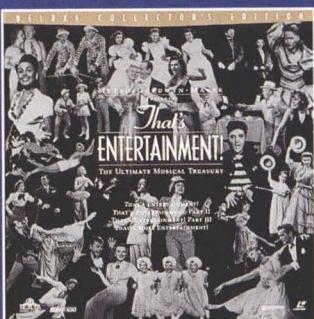
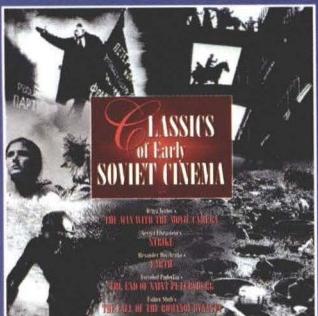


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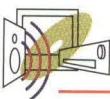
*B*UT WE ALSO KNOW THAT WHEN YOU'RE READY TO STEP OUT AND EXPERIENCE THE BEST, LASERDISC IS IT.

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## System of the Month

These sound *very, very, very* smooth, with a quality of midrange similar to that of the best high-end speakers I've heard. Unlike most of the speakers I hear, they aren't too bright, and they don't fatigue your ears. A lot of people tend to buy bright-sounding gear because it initially sounds more exciting. But you can get tired of such a sound pretty quickly once you get the gear home; I've found that when my system sounds bright,



**E.** You'll find speaker- and line-level inputs, as well as a volume control, on the back of the sub.

**F.** Along with good sound quality, the System 250.1 provided good sturdy binding posts to hook everything up.

I don't listen to it as much. Atlantic president Peter Tribeman feels the same way—according to him, the speakers' sound is the result of a conscious decision to gently roll off the extreme high frequencies.

With this slight roll-off, the 251.1LRs don't produce the airy, super-spacious sound you get from expensive, well-designed music speakers. But they still image quite well, thanks largely to their slim front baffles, which give the sound from the drivers almost no surface at all to reflect off of. They remind me of the Mirages I use in my home reference system, and I've remained happy with those speakers' sound for eight

months now—about seven months and three weeks longer than most speakers last in my apartment. I didn't have a chance to compare the Atlantic system with the ones in last month's Face Off, but I'm certain it would have fared well against any of them, and it might well have won.

The old 251LRs played plenty loud; the new 251.1LRs play even *louder*. And now they've got a sub that can keep up with them. The original sub sounded great for the price, but the 262PBM's bigger amp gives it a sense of punch and speed the original never attained. It has line- and speaker-level inputs, and a phase switch, volume control, and low-pass filter that controls the upper limit for the subwoofer's response, from 60 to 125 Hertz.

Atlantic promotes the System 250.1 as being "5.1-ready," meaning that it's suitable for Dolby Digital or DTS digital surround sound. The extra dynamic range in the sats and subs certainly helps with digital surround—and it really proved itself when we gave the tank chase from *GoldenEye*'s Dolby Digital soundtrack a cranked-up listen—but Tribeman considers the 254.1SR the major contributor to System 250.1's 5.1-readiness, because of the new design's extended treble. The increase in treble response is definitely noticeable—a real tweeter instead of a mid/tweet can make a big difference, even in the rear.

Some would argue that the 254.1SR's dipolar design (the two halves fire in opposite directions and are wired out of phase) makes it inappropriate for Dolby Digital, but I think these people aren't listening with an open mind. They

posit that you can't get imaging between the left and right surround speakers in a dipole setup, but given that all Dolby Digital soundtracks are mixed on an array of several surround speakers, it's a safe bet that no one's ever created a mix where there was supposed to be any imaging between the surrounds. I think dipoles in the rear give you a spacious, realistic surround effect, while direct-radiating surround speakers tend to call attention to themselves.

All arguments aside, though, the 254.1SRs sounded great—basically just like a THX-approved surround speaker. They give you a real wraparound surround

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Smooth enough to keep you happy over the long term
- Loud enough to keep the guy who lives two doors down unhappy over the long term
- Powerful movie sound, mellow music sound that's pleasing day in and day out
- Modest in price, very small in size

effect, and seem to have loads of power handling.

We can *very* easily recommend this system for practically anybody, from the person looking for a super-compact apartment system, to the guy who demands a single system that sounds good on anything, to the flathead who just wants maximum crankage for the buck.

—Brent Butterworth

# The concert at 930 Morningstar Lane features Gershwin Next door at 932 Morningstar, Meagan



Of course, the artists won't appear at the Henderson residence in person, but the performances will be extraordinarily live just same...with PianoSoft™ pre-recorded disks and the Disklavier piano.

*Listening Series* disks reproduce every nuance of the artist's original performance when played back on the Disklavier.

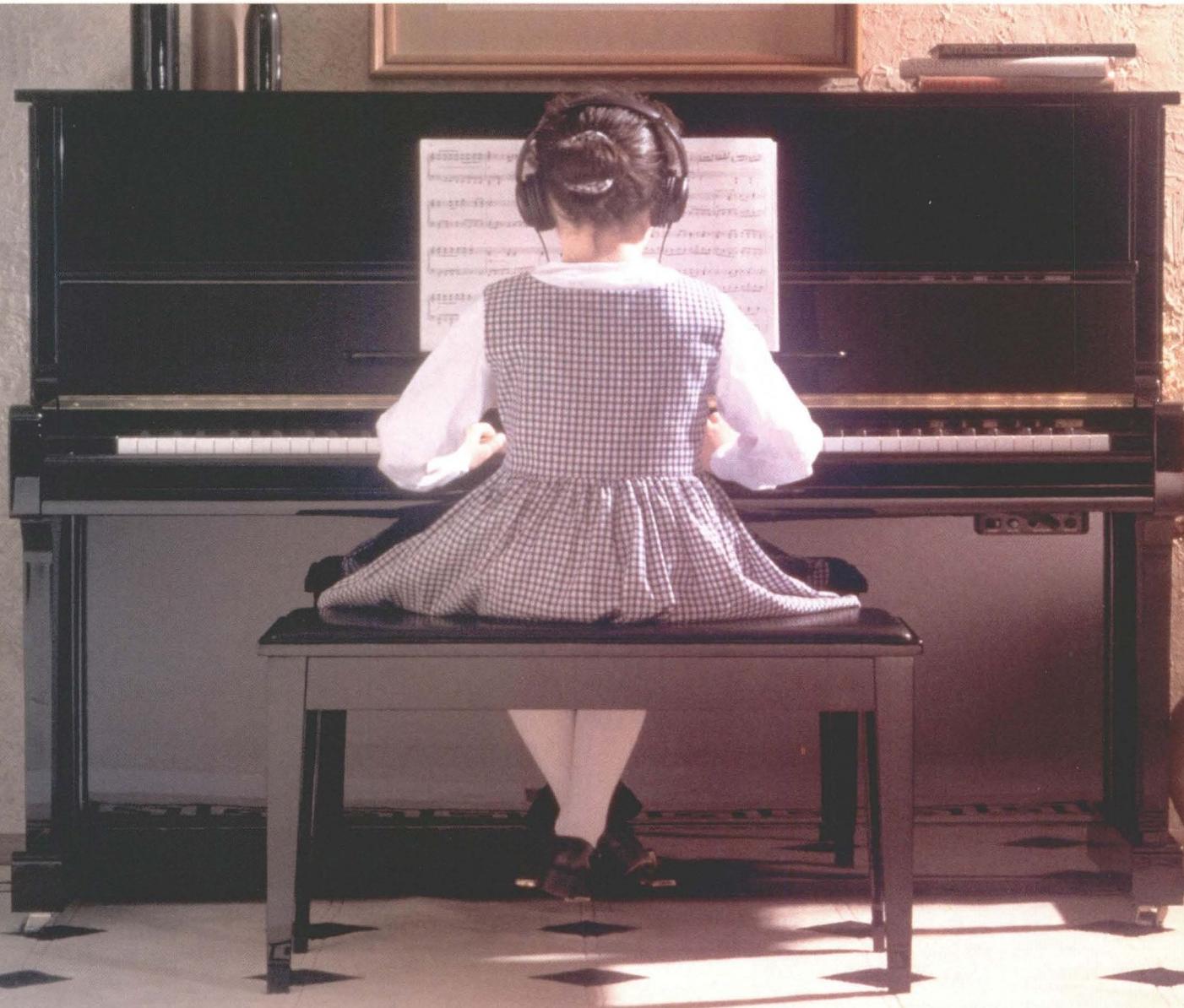
So, if you're not invited to the Henderson's concert series, audition the PianoSoft library and the Disklavier piano at your authorized Yamaha piano dealer and begin planning your own star-studded concert season.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE 164



## System of the Month

**A. You won't hear the HD-500's noisy internal fan because it doesn't have one!**



### Dwin HD-500 Data Projector and LD-2 Line Doubler

*Home Theater*'s editors unanimously agree: Front projectors are the way to go for home theater. Sure, we review direct-view and rear-projection TVs—they're the real-world products, the kind that the vast majority of consumers currently use in their own home systems. But it's the ultra-expensive high-end projectors, line doublers, and line quadruplers—the Runcos, Vidikrons, Faroudjas—that get us salivating. There's something magical about seeing an image blown up to movie-theater size, with filmlike quality, in a home environment. For us, it perfectly encapsulates the home theater experience. Aside from the thrill of approximating the big-screen experience at home, there are several sound reasons why you should consider investing in a front-projection system for your

home theater. The first is that data- and graphics-grade projectors are able to support the different horizontal scan rates of video and computer sources. In this era of convergence between computer and video technologies, it makes sense to acquire a video display device that can handle multiple scanning rates. The second is that High Definition Television, when it eventually becomes a reality, will be transmitted in the progressive scan format used by computers. A graphics-grade front projector, such as the Dwin HD-500, with a horizontal scanning rate of 63 kHz or higher will be equipped to support the HDTV format when it finally becomes available, and, until that time comes, will allow you to use video processing devices such as line doublers and line quadruplers to create higher-resolution images from current 525-line video sources.

Regular *HT* readers will be familiar with the Vidikron VPF50HD front projector/VP400

line quadrupler combo (February '96 issue) and the Runco IDP-980 Ultra front projector/SC3050 line doubler combo (May '96 issue): two front projector/video processor systems that literally define the state-of-the-art in home video. Regular *HT* readers might also be aware that both systems cost in the area of \$30,000 to \$40,000, or the average annual income of the majority of Americans. Obviously, the state of the art is beyond the financial grasp of the masses. But that's characteristic of the state of the art.

At least we thought so until, while wandering through Consumer Electronics Shows (the equivalent of a trip to Disneyland for audio/video enthusiasts), we encountered the video manufacturer Dwin Electronics, who happened to be displaying in the same booth with Atlantic Technology. We were already well aware of the

## THE FIRST SONY THAT DOESN'T STAND OUT AT ALL.



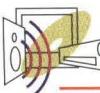
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## System of the Month

value represented by Atlantic Technology's products; what we weren't prepared for was the price of the impressive front projector/line doubler combo we were viewing. It was "only" \$15,000—a price that some of us could actually live with!

### HD-500 Projector

The \$12,000 Dwin HD-500 projector is a graphics-grade model, which means that it has a horizontal scanning rate range of 15.5 to 65 kilohertz. This makes it compatible with a number of current video processing devices such as line doublers and quadruplers, and ensures compatibility with future video formats such as HDTV. Its 7-inch CRTs, though not capable of producing as bright a picture as the Runco IDP-980 Ultra, which employs 8-inch picture tubes, will produce a sufficiently bright picture on a properly chosen screen. In our studio, we used a Stewart StudioTek 130 perforated screen with an aspect ratio of 1.85 and gain of 1.3 (actually a bit lower because of the perforations). We probably could have gone down a bit in screen size and

**B.** Your installer will take care of converging the projector, so you'll probably only use the remote for basic functions.



B

changed out the perforated screen to achieve even better brightness with HD-500, but even with these handicaps, the Dwin was able to produce a sufficiently bright picture. That is, as long as we kept tight control over the ambient light situation in our room (read: utter blackness).

An odd thing about the Dwin HD-500 is the absence of an NTSC decoder in the unit, which makes the use of an external decoder an absolute necessity. For those wishing to use the projector for basic NTSC video operating at a horizontal scanning rate of 15.75 kHz, Dwin makes a \$1,250 external decoder called the VC-5, which will also allow you to use the projector to display source material recorded in the PAL video standard. Most users, however, will opt to purchase the \$3,500 Dwin LD-2 line doubler to use for outboard decoding. For those wishing to go this route, Dwin offers both the projector and line doubler as a package, and

shaves \$500 off the total price. Feel free to use this extra cash for incidental items such as rent; after all, a home theater requires a home first and foremost.

The HD-500 may lack an NTSC decoder, but another item that's

missing from it is something we can actually live without: an internal fan. Front projectors of every type generally use fans to cool the internal electronics, a necessary evil that results in a constant, low-level whirring sound that becomes audible when the music and effects in a movie's soundtrack die down. Most learn to live with it; others find it so objectionable that it dictates their decision not to purchase a front-projection system at all. In the design of the HD-500, Dwin's engineers began with high-efficiency power supplies and then figured out a way to route the thermal output of heat-generating components within the projector to the unit's aluminum chassis, thus causing it to act as a heat sink. The result is near silence when you turn on the HD-500.

Setup of the HD-500 was easier than we expected. Dwin's representative had the projector converged for two different aspect ratios within an hour and a half's time; weeks later, when we ourselves experimented with setup and convergence, we found the process to be fairly intuitive and quick. Dwin makes setup easy by providing a number of useful internal test patterns, including a needle pulse for setting contrast, and a gray scale for setting white balance. (Of course, any CRT front-projection system should be professionally installed.)

In converging the HD-500, you first establish mechanical focus on each of the red, green, and blue CRTs for the center and edges of

# A Breakthrough! “Definitive’s New BP2002 Achieves An Impossible Dream.”

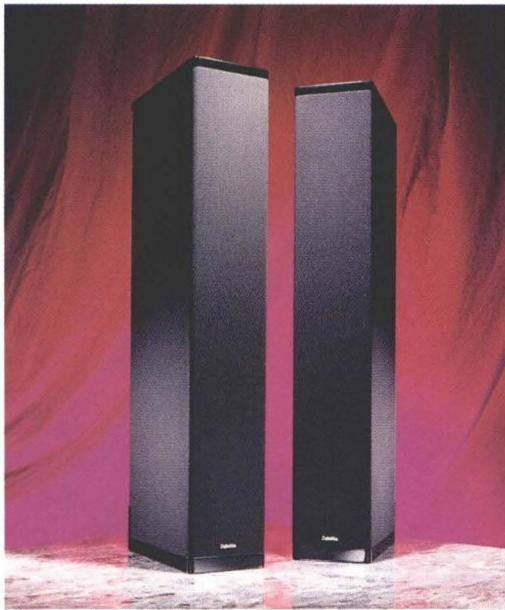
—Peter Moncrieff, *International Audio Review*

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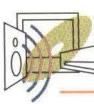
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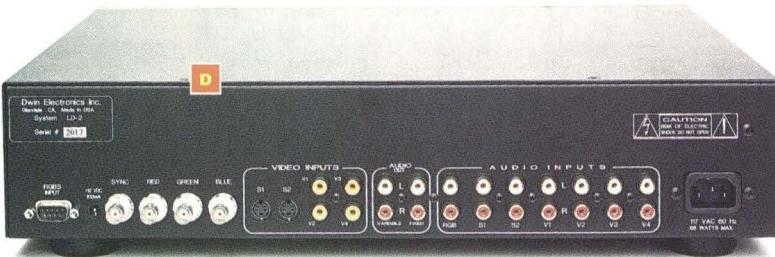
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## System of the Month

**C. The LD-2 line doubler performed nearly as well as units we've reviewed costing much, much more.**

**D. A digital comb filter on the LD-2 helps reduce dot crawl and hanging dots to a minimum.**



the image; you then proceed to electronic focus, geometry, and convergence adjustments. Once global convergence is established, fine convergence featuring 100 points can be used to dial in your adjustments to perfection. There are nine possible settings per scan frequency, with a total of 60 source memories on the projector, which will allow the installer to set every conceivable aspect ratio you'd need for your home theater and then some. Settings are stored in the HD-500's menu system, where you can name them for later recall.

### LD-2 Line Doubler

At \$3,500, Dwin's LD-2 line doubler is one of the least expensive doublers on the market. In the past, we've seen inexpensive line

doublers cause more problems than they solved by introducing digital artifacts. This wasn't the case at all with the LD-2.

Line doublers serve to fill in the scan lines in an NTSC image. On a 100-inch screen, the benefits of line doubling technology immediately become apparent: Visible scan lines disappear, leaving a seamless, filmlike image onscreen. The LD-2 accomplishes this feat by digitizing the incoming interlaced video signal—essentially a series of frames (30 per second), each consisting of two video fields; each field represents half of the lines in a 525-line NTSC video frame. The LD-2 holds two video frames at a time in memory, and its line interpolation circuit then compares them for motion differences. The interpolated frames are output at twice the rate of the incoming interlaced signal, and

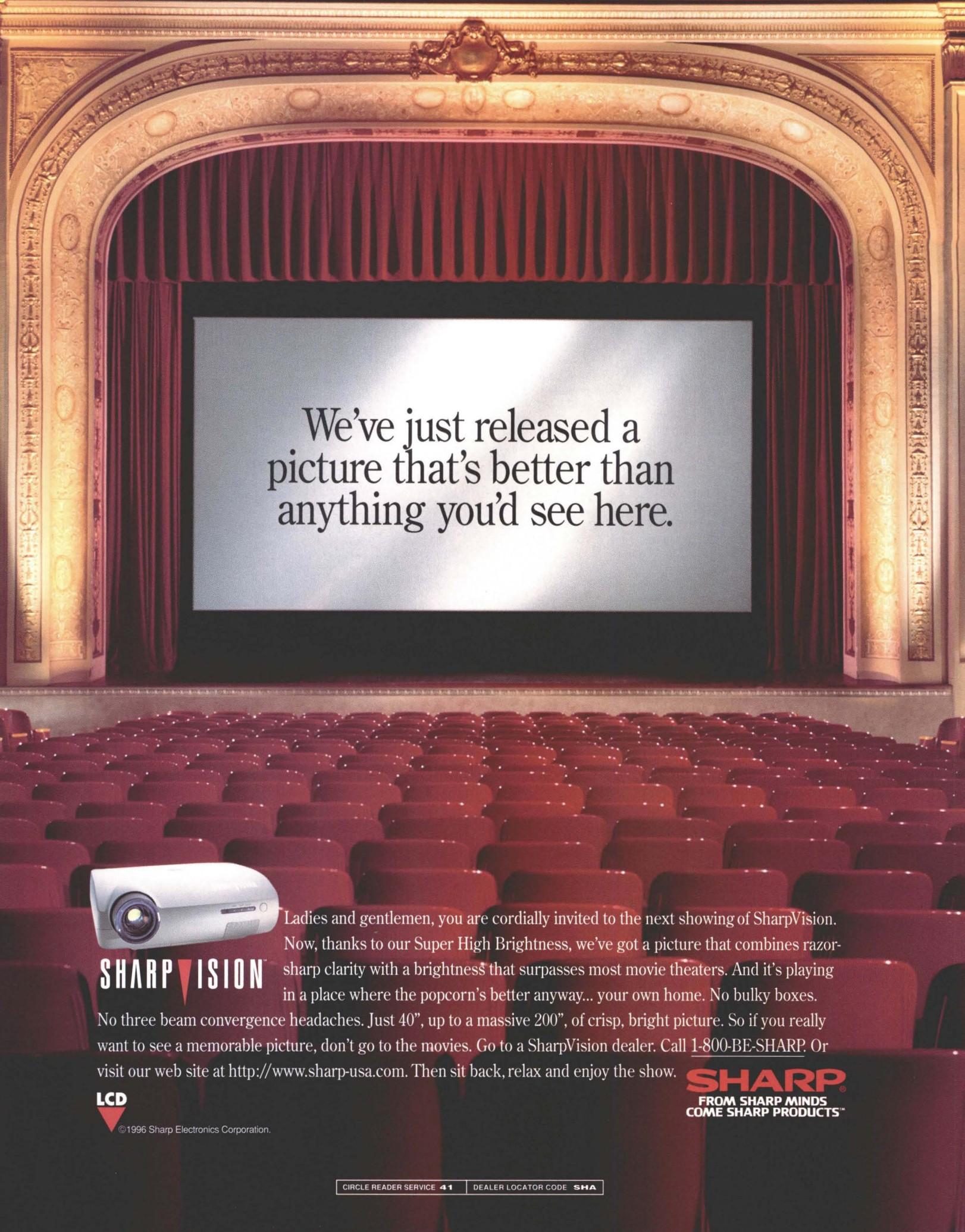
scanned progressively, meaning that the image you ultimately see consists of twice as many fields displayed sequentially within the same period of time.

Aside from doubling the scan frequency of the incoming video signal, the LD-2 has several other features which serve to enhance the quality of the displayed video image. Its digital comb filter does

### HIGHLIGHTS

- No fan; low ambient noise
- LD-2's motion-adaptive line interpolation circuit reduces digital artifacts
- 100-point fine convergence for precision setup
- Absence of an NTSC decoder in the projector necessitates the use of an external decoder
- Excellent value

a very good job of reducing dot crawl and hanging dots, and an adjustable video noise reduction circuit helps to reduce visible noise from poor-quality laserdisc transfers. Picture settings for



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## System of the Month

**A.** Brian found the SR-96 to be much easier to set up than Yamaha's DSP-A3090. **B.** Unfortunately, the receiver's performance was significantly better on music than movies.



brightness, contrast, color, tint, sharpness, and video noise reduction can be stored in memory for each video input, and three personal preference settings can also be created and applied to any of the LD-2's inputs. The unit acts as a switcher, with a total of seven video inputs, including four composite, two S-video, and one RGB input (for use with PCs). Output to the projector is from RGB+S (sync) jacks.

Having seen the state of the art in front projection in our own studio, we can comfortably say that the Dwin HD-500/LD-2 combo compares favorably to the pricey high-end behemoths. The

projected image was detailed, sharp and virtually free of artifacts—which is a testament to the quality of the LD-2 line doubler. We actually had to search through several discs to find material that would break up to any significant degree, and the only instance where this occurred was in scenes where diagonal lines tracked against panned camera motions: a torture test for any line doubler, even \$15,000 ones.

The benefits of a line-doubled front-projection system are so great that we consider any video enthusiast lacking one, ourselves included, to be grievously deprived. Which is why we're glad the \$15,000 Dwin HD-500/LD-2 system exists: It provides performance approaching that of the

Runco and Vidikron systems at literally half the price. The Dwin HD-500/LD-2 combo is one that we'd be perfectly happy to have in our own home theaters.

—Al Griffin

### Marantz SR-96 A/V Receiver

Being new around here, I've been trying to discretely listen to conversations, dropping some comments here and there to see if anyone bites, thinking I might expose an ugly prejudice against A/V receivers. I've had a sneaky feeling that anything with an AM/FM tuner in it might be seen as a lower caste piece of equipment. "Oh man, you gotta get separates," I've heard in the past. It's been a few weeks now, and I'm starting to feel as though I cooked this up in my own mind. I'm waiting to pounce, trying to put words in Brent and Al's mouths, but I've got no definitive proof. I can hear Brent bellowing, "The \*@#! set me up!" It wouldn't be the first time Brent called me a name, deservedly or not.



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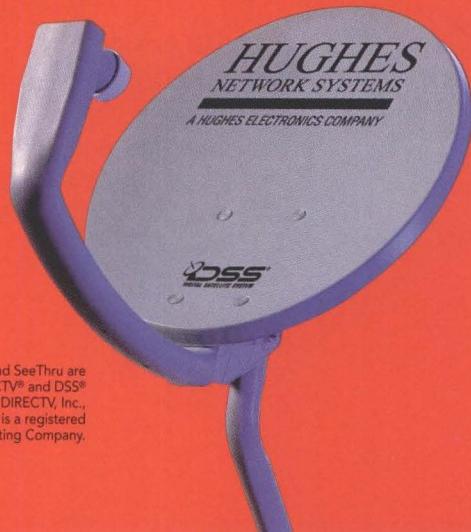


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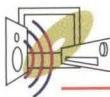
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## System of the Month

So I've let go; I approached the Marantz SR-96 with pure intentions and no pre-judging. There's nothing inherently bad about a tuner. Just because I haven't become a National Public Radio junkie yet, doesn't mean I won't. That's just one of my "yets." These days, there's so much processing and converting and amplifying and routing going on in these black boxes called A/V receivers that you have to wonder.

The Marantz SR-96, weighing in at 32 pounds, uses a dual DSP surround sound processor, delivers Dolby Pro Logic, and is THX certified. The SR-96 is also Dolby AC-3 ready, with rear-panel RCA jacks that accept discrete 5.1-channel inputs, enabling it to work with the Marantz DP-870 Dolby Digital processor reviewed in the September '96 *HT*.

Power output in the surround mode is 110 watts for the front channels and 90 watts for the surround channels into 8 ohms. The SR-96's THX certification allows it to drive speaker impedances of 3.2 ohms and higher. The surround modes available are THX Cinema, Dolby Pro Logic, movie surround, 3CH Logic, hall, matrix,

**C. This old thang is being replaced with the super-cool RC-2000 remote as we speak!**



and mono. Movie surround has a longer delay time (from 40 to 90 milliseconds) for use in "very large" rooms. Matrix surround is intended for sporting events or outdoor broadcasts, giving a wider surround area. These DSP modes aren't overkill, like what we found on Yamaha's DSP-A3090 integrated amp. Of course, you might *want* to pretend that Bob Dylan tribute was in a cathedral.

The clean front-panel design is a nice balance between having too many buttons and having to use the remote control for every function. The back panel has five pre out/main in jacks along with an output for a subwoofer.

Speaker connections accept banana jacks, which is a good thing. We like banana jacks so much we think a nice sugary breakfast cereal should be created in their honor. There's four audio inputs and five video inputs, plus a front-panel auxiliary input. Each video input has an S-video option, which is great, but the onscreen display will work only when you're using composite connections between your monitor and video components.

*Man*, penalized for trying to get the best picture! Two AC outlets, one switched and one unswitched, are also on the back panel.

You can make a music tape and record a videotape at the same time with the dual-record output selector. I'm trying to imagine a

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Dual DSP processing for Dolby Pro Logic and THX
- Dolby AC-3 ready, with discrete six-channel inputs for connection to outboard processor
- Two words: banana jacks!
- Unlimited promise of RC-2000 remote

situation where that would be necessary—maybe you need to record "Fresh Aire" and *Masterpiece Theater* at the same time. Hey, you're covered.

The AM/FM tuner has 30 station presets with a station-naming function. That's about as exciting as it gets with tuners. The P Scan button on the front panel scans all of your programmed stations.

To use the multiroom feature, you'll need to purchase an IR-92 remote control unit and remote control signal receiver, which will control the tuner and a CD player or tape deck connected to the SR-96. The IR-92 package is priced at \$99. But don't get *too* far away—the SR-96 needs to be connected to the multiroom receiver by coaxial cable with RCA jacks as terminators.

I found setup and calibration easy and intuitive. The onscreen

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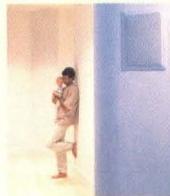


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# The Home Entertainment Superhighway

Observations by Ivan Zuckerman, President of Niles. No. 1 in a series

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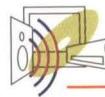
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## System of the Month

displays were easy to follow. It took next to no time to calibrate the system, unlike the Yamaha DSP-A3090. Unfortunately, the remote I used was to be replaced with the new RC-2000 system remote control. Marantz had just received the new remotes as we went to press so I didn't have the opportunity to try the remote, which will also be available separately for \$250. The RC-2000 is the result of lots of research by Marantz to find out that people don't want to use more than one remote. This one controls 10 components, and from the photo I saw it looks user-friendly enough. It includes backlit keys and an LCD panel with learning capability. Initially the remote has Marantz codes and Thomson codes for DSS.

To check out the sound quality of the receiver in Pro Logic mode, I watched the tank chase scene from the latest James Bond film, *GoldenEye*. It's a tough scene for a system to do, with all that metal scraping pavement and cars being crushed, buildings demolished—no one gets killed as I remember, that would be gratuitous. But it's a helluva sound test.

The sound steering, or movement from speaker to speaker, was good, but after a while, the sound became fatiguing. Compared to the Yamaha DSP-A3090, the Marantz had a smaller stage and the sound wasn't as full, which

contributed to the grating quality of the higher frequencies. Listening to the same scene in the THX mode didn't help. But music through the SR-96 was an altogether different experience. Put simply, it sounded great. I could be happy using it to listen to music and movies that weren't hardcore noisy action films. And, of course, it's perfect for National Public Radio.

—Brian Clark

<b>252.1LR Satellite Speaker</b>	\$369/pair
<b>253.1C Center Speaker</b>	\$319
<b>254.1SR Surround Speaker</b>	\$399/pair
<b>262 PBM Subwoofer</b>	\$649
<b>Total System Price</b>	about \$1,700

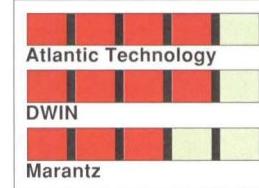
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**Dwin HD-500 Front Projector** \$12,000  
**LD-2 Line Doubler** \$3,500

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Glendale, CA 91201  
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**Marantz SR-96 A/V Receiver** \$1,600

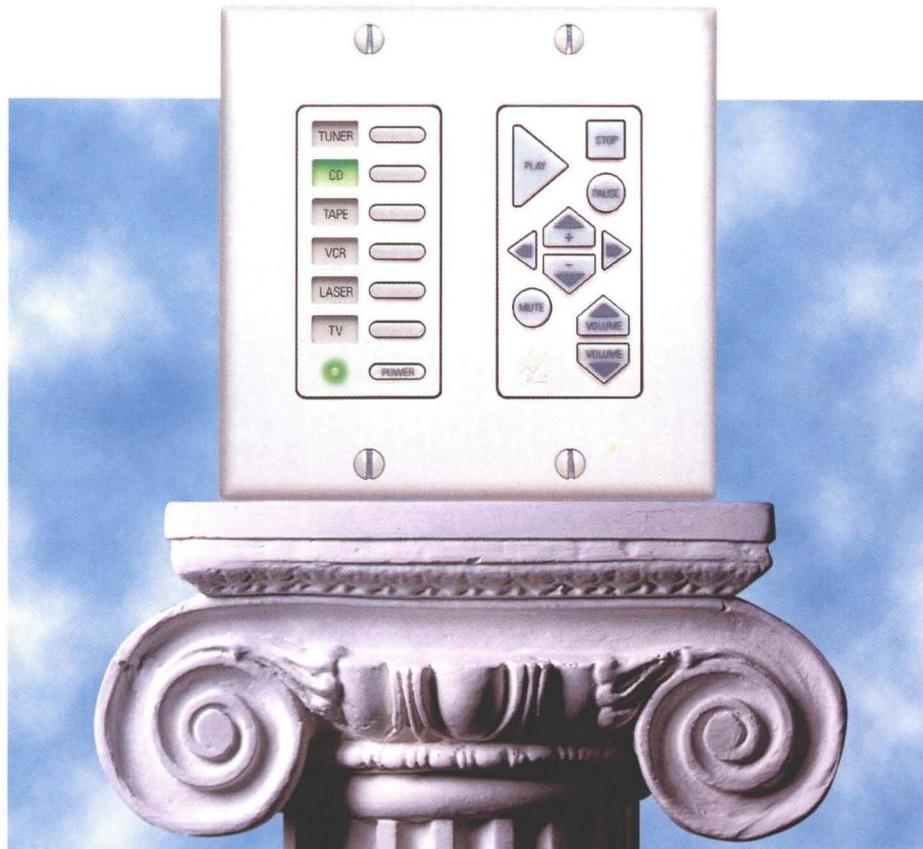
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# Attractive, Intelligent, and a Guaranteed Turn-On.



Advanced surface-mount semiconductor technology packs the processing power of a personal computer into a space the size of a light switch. A lithium back-up battery protects the program memory for up to ten years.

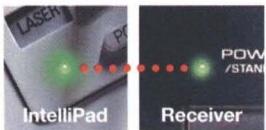


The IntelliPad features a built-in Speaker Relay that mutes the local speakers. In a multiple keypad system, only the room you're in turns on, so you'll never accidentally disturb others. The IntelliPads in the other rooms display that the system is on, but muted locally.

Introducing the IntelliPad, the perfect companion to any A/V system. The world's first programmable wall-mount IR keypad system with built-in intelligence, the IntelliPad learns IR commands from your hand-held remotes. But, unlike hand-held remotes, it can never be misplaced.

The IntelliPad's attractive design and geometrically shaped buttons beckon you to reach out and touch it. But the IntelliPad is more than just a pretty faceplate.

The IntelliPad is as smart as it is attractive. It solves the most common problem associated with controlling a remotely located A/V system—*knowing whether your equipment is on or off*. If you've ever pressed a button and wondered if it actually did something, then you know what we're talking about. You become impatient, press the button again, and find that you did the exact opposite of what you intended.



An LED indicator displays whether your remotely located A/V equipment is on or off.

## IntelliPad™

The IntelliPad's unique Power Status Synchronization circuitry actually knows when your system is on, and won't turn it off by mistake. Unlike IR repeater systems and other keypads, the IntelliPad puts you and your equipment in perfect harmony. No more "press and pray"—waiting endlessly for something to happen only to end up frustrated and unfulfilled.

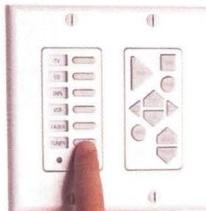


The IntelliPad controls virtually any brand or model of standard IR remote-controlled equipment.

**NILES**

This advanced automation technology enables you to create dozens of trouble-free sequences (macros). Each macro can contain up to 10 consecutive IR commands. This powerful combination of synchronization and macro programming makes reliable one-button control a reality, even if your system contains a variety of components from different manufacturers. With the IntelliPad, you simply select the source and the IntelliPad's microprocessor does the rest.

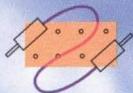
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GEAR GUIDE

## *Unique user features launch the DISH Network into space.*

*by Al Griffin*

ECHOSTAR

# Deep Dish

I remember a period of time about 20 years ago when I'd occasionally look up at the sky to make sure a flaming piece of Skylab wasn't hurtling toward me at 100 million miles per second. Nowadays I look to the sky for my television programming. With a grand total of four direct-broadcast satellite systems currently in orbit, providing North Americans with seemingly as many channels as there are stars in the heavens, it appears that space is getting a little crowded. The final frontier might be considerably vaster than the American West, but I predict that even outer space will get contested by the time the market for DBS services reaches full saturation.

A recent entrant into the cosmic world of DBS is the DISH Network, a full-service direct-broadcast satellite system featuring premium movie channels, pay-per-view offerings, music-only channels, and all the other types of programming you'd find on DirecTV and USSB (with the glaring exception of the metal channel). Its parent company, EchoStar, has been manufacturing hardware for consumer C-band satellite systems since 1980; DISH Network customers will presumably benefit from the company's extensive experience in servicing that community.

The DISH Network system consists of an 18-inch dish, a digital receiver, and a universal remote that uses radio signals to control the receiver and IR signals to control other types of equipment. At present, the company employs a single satellite for the system, with a second launch scheduled for September, and two more planned for next year. The additional satellites will allow the DISH Network to expand its programming options

to provide consumers with mo' better channels when they turn on their TVs. The digital compression scheme used for the system is MPEG-2 (the scheme used in competing systems, most of which are not true MPEG-2, is referred to as MPEG-1½). Not that the DISH Network has substantially better picture quality than its competitors, but issues of compatibility with future digital video products, such as the digital VCR, might eventually arise. By using true MPEG-2, DISH Network has its bases covered.

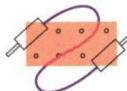
Up till now, distribution for the DISH Network has been through small satellite companies, most of which seem to be operated by people with missing teeth and license plate frames saying "When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns" (fade in banjo theme music from *Deliverance*). According to EchoStar, that will have changed this fall when DISH Network systems should be available in major consumer electronics chain stores. Like PrimeStar, one of the benefits to the DISH Network is its linear organization: The hardware, programming, and billing are all from the same company. This is quite different from the situation with DSS, where you're dealing with a grand total of three corporate entities at any given time. Should problems ever arise, one customer service call to the DISH Network is all you'll need to make.

Installing the DISH Network hardware involves about the same amount of hassle as you'd encounter with any of the minidish systems: You'll probably end up climbing around on the roof, and will need some basic tools

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- The DISH Network
- ADA Millennium Multiroom A/V System
- Toshiba M-782 Hi-Fi VHS VCR
- Legend Audio Model 4000 In-Walls





GEAR GUIDE

## DISH Network

and supplies, including a drill and appropriate bits, a hammer, and some clips to fasten down the long runs of coaxial cable from the dish to the receiver. For the intrepid DIY'er, DISH Network sells a self-installation kit that includes the majority of supplies you'll need to get the system up and running.

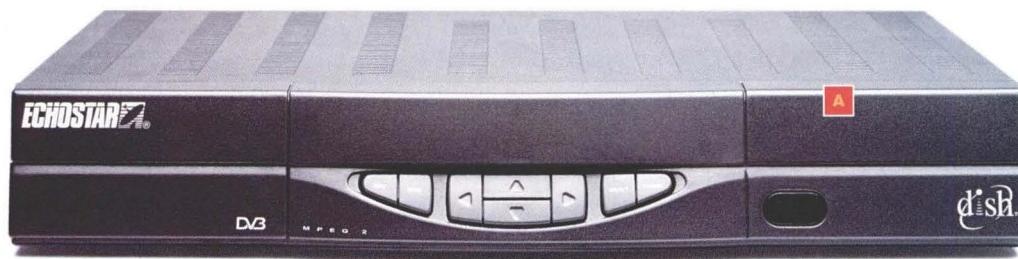
In the grand tradition of satellite gear, the DISH Network receiver's front panel is completely unadorned, with the exception of the few important buttons you'll

to operate the receiver from any room in the house should you decide to hook up a second audio/video system to the DISH Network. The remote itself is small and uncomplicated, concentrating the important controls in the center for easy access while channel surfing. A mode button at the top allows for switching between remote control of the receiver, a TV, a VCR, and an auxiliary device in your system; the current mode is indicated by an LED located directly above the mode button.

ing for a degree of continuity. For TV addicts with a limited attention span (i.e., most viewers) DISH Network's multi-tasking browse feature far surpasses either of those systems' guide-surfing solutions. Seamless continuity exists between present and future: Present meaning the program you're currently watching but are bored with; future meaning the fascinating program you're going to switch to after locating it in the guide.

The DISH Network's other guide features are similar to what you'd see in the competing DBS systems. There's a theme button on the remote that takes you to a screen listing various theme categories; you can create a customized favorite channel list and later call it up for browsing; V-chip-type controls allow you to create general ratings locks, or specific locks that will block out certain programs with child-sensitive content, such as violence or nudity. An info screen displays the start and end time of a particular program, the channel logo, and a synopsis box with a brief description of the program. Last, but certainly not least, the view button on the remote will immediately take you out of whatever complicated menu subscreen you've entered, safely delivering you back to the last selected program.

DISH Network programming is similar to what you'd find on other DBS systems. An abridged listing would include multichannel (East and West Coast) feeds of Cinemax, HBO, and Showtime, CNN, MTV, E!, TNT, TBS, the Weather Channel, Comedy Central, and



**A. The front panel is pretty plain-jane, except for a few important buttons you'll need to operate the receiver.**

**B. You'll find a high-speed data port on the back panel, which might just come in handy some day.**



need to operate the unit. The back panel features one S-video and two composite video outputs; two audio outputs; a phone jack for automatic pay-per-view ordering via remote; F-type connectors for antenna input and running the receiver's output to the TV with coaxial cable; and a high-speed data port for future uses, such as data reception and hookup to a digital VCR (something we hope to one day see). An additional antenna input exists for connecting the UHF antenna that receives commands from the remote.

The range of the UHF remote is 150 feet, which is enough leeway

Although the DISH Network's onscreen menu system cosmetically resembles that of the Sony and RCA DSS systems, there are a few significant differences between each unit's interface. What the DISH Network has that the DSS systems lack is a browse feature that allows you to use the remote to surf through guide listings while continuing to watch the currently selected program. On the RCA unit, channel surfing involves entering a guide screen that cuts out both the audio and the video of the program you'd been watching; the Sony unit, on the other hand, blocks out the video, but passes the audio, allowing

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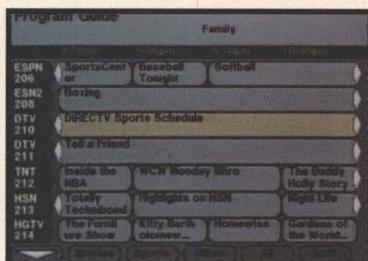


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➤ The DSS system was designed to be fully compatible with local broadcast stations. With a push of a button you can switch between the DSS system and your local TV stations.

➤ Owning the hardware is more cost efficient than renting from cable companies or other mini-dish systems and the DSS 18" dish is so small and easy to mount it's hardly noticeable.

➤ The DSS system works with your current TV or home entertainment system.

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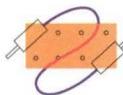
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GEAR GUIDE

# DISH Network

## Head to Head

C'mon, Al, what's the big deal? Yet another DBS system in a field that's already getting crowded with me-too products. Sure, this thing has a couple of smart features—namely, the radio remote and the channel-surfing facility—but those are really narrow differentiations that anyone could have thought up, and that the competition will copy soon enough. Otherwise, it's the same video and audio quality, pretty much the same channels, the same price, and the same installation.

What I'd like to see from a DBS system is a clear advantage in programming—not just the fact that one has the Movie Channel or MSNBC when another one doesn't. Why don't these companies get off their butts and do some programming of their own? They've already created music channels that are a lot more listenable than the radio. Why not do the same for movies, with a serious effort to present programming of interest to movie buffs: more letterboxed programming, and an active effort to present unheralded classics and more genre films. MTV does a decent job of packaging genres of music into different programs, so you can skip the junk you know you're going to hate; why can't DBS providers do more than provide recent-release, run-of-the-mill movie channels and PPV?

This is a new service. Presumably, EchoStar could have learned something from DSS's (few) mistakes, and actually come out with something that's not just new, but improved. Where's the DBS Internet service we've heard about? Where's Dolby Digital?

The technology's out there, but the product's not.

There are a lot of compelling reasons to get into direct-broadcast satellite, but right now, I don't see a compelling reason to choose one service over another.

—Brent Butterworth

**C. No matter how deep you get into the program guide, the view button will always take you back to the program you were watching.**

others too numerous to mention here. A few channels that we'd like to see, however, aren't available, including American Movie Classics, Bravo, the Independent Film Channel, and the Sundance



Channel. Sports fans will also rue the lack of certain sports channels, such as the Madison Square Garden Network. Pay-per-view offerings, though not nearly as extensive as what you'd get with DirecTV and USSB, do include many recent-release movies—none of which, unfortunately, are presented in the widescreen format. The price for programming packages ranges from \$20 to \$50 per month, and pay-per-view selections are \$2.99 each.

The quality of the DISH Network's digital video is comparable

to that of other DBS systems, meaning that it's significantly better than cable, and about on par with the resolution of laserdisc. Using an S-video cable to hook up the receiver to a TV made a significant difference: Images took on a smooth, noiseless quality which we preferred to those produced using the receiver's composite video output. Digital artifacts were negligible: The only time we perceived any significant image breakup was in visually intricate scenes where

there was a good amount of rapid onscreen motion. The quality of the digital audio was also quite good, and certainly comparable to what we'd heard from competing DBS systems.

With an increasing amount of DBS options on the market, your decision about which one to acquire should be based on how each system addresses your particular needs. For those who aren't interested in

owning the hardware, and would prefer to lease it, there's Primestar; for those interested in purchasing the hardware, there's DISH Network, AlphaStar, and

## HIGHLIGHTS

- UHF remote control allows for operation of receiver from anywhere within the home
- Browse feature enables simultaneous viewing and channel surfing with audio/video pass-through
- Excellent video quality with minimal digital artifacts
- Single monthly programming bill and customer service number
- Programming options currently not as extensive as competing DBS systems, but that might change soon

DSS. The differences in price, programming, and quality between the various systems are marginal; the real differences lie in the interface and convenience features. The DISH Network provides all of the benefits found in the competing systems, and even manages to edge them out with their unique and highly useful browse feature. The sheer volume of programming isn't exactly there yet, but that situation is sure to change once they launch a few more satellites. ☺

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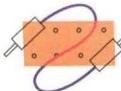
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE 186



# ADA Millennium Multiroom Audio/Video System

High-end multiroom sound comes down a little bit closer to Earth.

by Brent Butterworth

The more I fool with this multiroom audio stuff, the more I wonder why it hasn't made its way into the average American home. Who wouldn't want to have music in every room of the house, acces-

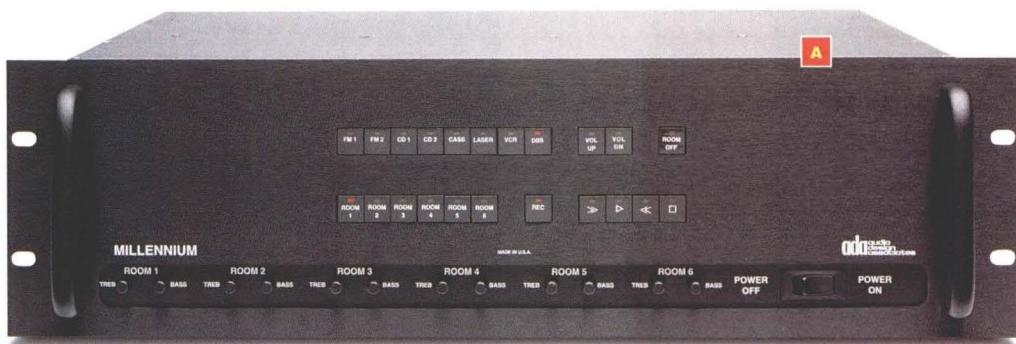
rich. Multiroom gear is expensive. Typical installations run more than \$15,000, and it gets a lot higher from there. Most of the companies that make this kind of gear know where their bread is buttered, though. They know that the custom installers who sell multiroom audio and video systems

magazine), ADA's multiroom systems are engineered for exceptional sound quality. And the high-quality parts such engineering demands don't come cheap. Because these guys have been in business since way back when hardly anyone had even heard of custom installation, and because they've designed most of their products specifically to meet the needs of the custom installer, they've won a healthy following. Thus, you'll find ADA gear in some of the most prestigious installations in the world.

Still, though, the company's Delta 88 multiroom system proved to be too high-end for the more mainstream customers that custom installers are now trying to woo (presumably, many rich people already have the stuff by now). That's why ADA came out with the Millennium, an all-in-one unit that, at about \$7,000 for a six-zone system, comes in near the low end of the multiroom audio market.

I've been getting into multiroom gear ever since I reviewed the McIntosh multiroom system last year, so naturally, I was dying to see what a company with ADA's rep could accomplish. So I borrowed a Millennium system and all its attendant accessories, set up an "installation" in and around the *Home Theater* listening room, and proceeded to dink around with it for several hours.

Most of what you get with the Millennium system is built into a



**A. ADA's Millennium can control six different zones in your house, so you can listen to the CD player in the bedroom and the cassette deck on the outdoor patio.**

**B. Because this system's only available through custom installers, chances are you won't even see the back panel of your new Millennium.**



sible from a tiny keypad built into the wall? No remote to carry around, no running back to the living room to turn down the volume, no more arguing between family members about what to listen to.

But as soon as I start to look at the price lists for most multiroom gear, I remember why it's confined largely to the homes of the

cater to the clientele for whom money is little or no object. Thus, most of them focus on very high-end systems, and few seem to have tried to get their prices down.

Audio Design Associates has a rep for creating some of the highest of the high-end multiroom systems out there—like their amps and surround processors (which have won acclaim in this



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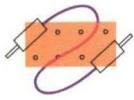
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE 94

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## ADA Millennium

single, rack-mount chassis that contains the control circuitry for six zones, a stereo 30-watt-per-channel amp for each zone, and circuitry that lets you control your source components from any of the six zones. The idea is that the Millennium main chassis sits in your home theater room, and all of your source devices (up to eight) connect to it. In up to six other rooms, then, you have a control keypad and a set of stereo speakers. From each keypad, you

(in black, cream, or white). These occupy a single-gang wall box, so they take up the same amount of room as a light switch. Each Decora has source selectors (with LEDs to indicate which source is selected), an off button, volume up and down buttons, and four source control keys. (To perform the fifth function, you tap the source selector twice.) The Decoras are perfectly functional, but ADA also offers a wide variety of other keypads at extra cost, including chrome- and brass-plated models, wired tabletop controls, a water-

the Millennium. But, I'm just telling you this to satisfy your curiosity—the Millennium's only available through custom installers, and your installer will do all the wiring and setup.

The amps use block-style speaker terminals—each block has little screw connectors that secure the wire, and the block plugs straight into the Millennium's back panel. The blocks won't accommodate fat wire, but there's plenty of good, thinner wire from companies like Monster, XLO, and TARA Labs that will fit just fine. (There are also fixed- and variable-level line outputs for each channel that you can use to drive an external amp.) I gave the amps a critical listen through a pair of NHT SuperOnes, and found them pretty much in the same high-quality vein as other ADA stuff I've tried. The amps are rated down to 2 ohms, so each zone can power up to four pairs of 8-ohm speakers.

I feel uncomfortable describing the amps' sonic characteristics in detail, though, because I'm not sure if I was hearing the amp or the effects of the bass and treble controls on the Millennium's front panel. Because there's no center detent or marking on the control, it's impossible to set the controls for an accurate, flat response. I really like the idea of having tone controls on a multiroom controller—most of the in-wall speakers out there need the help—but ADA could make this unit a lot simpler to use just by putting a little mark on the tone controls so you could see how they're set.



- C. The basic system comes with five light switch-sized keypads, which control basic functions.**  
**D. For a little more money, you can get keypads with infrared receivers that let you use one of ADA's handheld remotes.**  
**E. Brent dug this handheld brass beauty for controlling the Millennium.**

can select any source you want to listen to, and adjust the volume for that zone. All this is independent of the other zones, by the way—you can listen to the CD player in the bedroom, the cassette deck on the patio, and the VCR in the kitchen. You can also control four functions (usually play, stop, forward, and reverse) on four of the sources; on the other four, you can control five functions. The keypad controls automatically switch to whatever source device you have selected.

The basic Millennium system comes with five Decora keypads

proof outdoor pad, and double-gang wall controls with infrared receivers that let you use one of

ADA's custom remote controls. (You can get a basic, black plastic remote, or for a more upscale look, the brass-plated model you see in the photo, which I really enjoyed using.) Some have illuminated readouts that tell you which source is selected.

The keypads connect to the Millennium through shielded, 10-conductor wire (Liberty Wire and Cable actually offers a special Millennium wire designed just for this purpose.) The wires from all the keypads tie into a junction box, which in turn connects to



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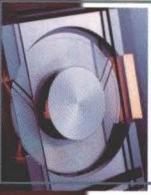
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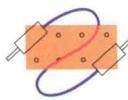


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GEAR GUIDE

## ADA Millennium

Besides amplifying and switching the sources and zones, the Millennium also works like a programmable universal remote. The back panel holds an infrared eye, a button that lets you enter the programming mode, and several indicator lights. To enter the codes, your installer simply activates the program mode, selects the source device to be programmed from the front panel, holds down the button to be programmed (play, stop, etc.),

points the remote at the IR eye on the back, and presses the appropriate button on the remote.

The Millennium sends out the infrared remote control commands through flashers—little infrared LEDs that connect to the Millennium's back

panel. Your installer will stick a flasher onto the front of each source device, right in front of the device's infrared detector. You'll barely notice the flashers, and they don't interfere with normal remote control operation. I had no problem getting the remote commands programmed into the Millennium, and they worked perfectly from all the zones I set up. It's really a kick to be able to skip to the next track on your CD player by pushing a button in a different room. If you've never tried multiroom gear before, this is the feature that will really hook you in.

There's also an optional composite video switcher that con-

ncts between the keypad junction box and the Millennium main unit. The switcher operates transparently; it automatically routes the video from your selected source to the zone you're in, so you don't have to operate the system any differently. The switcher has eight inputs, outputs for eight zones, and multipin connectors that interface it with the keypads and the Millennium main unit. I found the switcher worked just fine; you don't notice its addition to the system, and that's just as it should be. The switcher may seem expensive at \$2,100, but when you consider that it's really eight video switchers in one (one for each zone), it breaks down to only about \$265 per switcher, which is very reasonable.

ADA also offers a couple of accessories worth noting. One's an automatic AC power strip that connects to the back of the Millennium and automatically turns on whatever source devices you have selected. The other is a zone tracker, which works in a single zone to send out a 5- or 12-volt trigger voltage whenever you select a certain source, so when you select laserdisc in the living room, it could automatically close the curtains and lower your projection screen.

Besides markings on the tone controls, there's one feature I'd like to see added to Millennium: I wish ADA would include loop-through outputs for all the source devices. That way, I'd be able to connect my sources into the Millennium, and back out to my preamp/processor, so my main system would function exactly as before. Of course, your installer

can use splitters to send the A/V signals to both the Millennium and your pre/pro, or you can actually make your main home theater room one of the zones, and just do your switching from the Millennium main unit or one of the remote controls ADA offers. So there are plenty of easy ways around the problem, but having the loop-through outputs would simplify hookup, at least in my case.

The Millennium seems to offer everything I'd ever want in a multiroom system. Multiroom's for the family, though, not just for the resident gear geek, so what's important is that the system operates smoothly and intuitively enough for anyone to use it. And the Millennium does. With its nonsense keypad design and very simple operation steps, anyone can just walk up to a keypad, start pressing buttons, and get what they want in a matter of seconds without reading a manual. And if you want more zones, you can buy more Millenniums and interface them with the first one, for a total of up to 36 zones. I won't be needing that anytime soon; if you do, you're a lucky guy. ☺

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Fairly reasonable price for high-quality multiroom sound
- High-quality amps built in
- Wide selection of keypads
- Can accommodate practically any consumer need in multiroom A/V
- Unmarked tone controls make getting flat response difficult

Overall Rating



**ADA Millennium Multiroom Audio/Video System** \$7,000 and up

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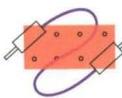


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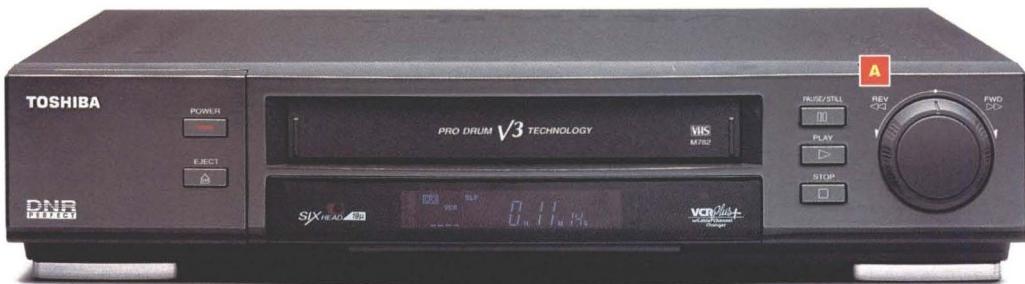
# Toshiba M-782 Hi-Fi VHS VCR

A great deck for home theaters with smaller screens, the M-782 is a solid performer.

by Brian Clark

What can you do these days that's going to make one VHS hi-fi VCR stick out from the others? Programming has been improved, good sound is there, but the most important function for a VCR is the picture it produces—how can

Toshiba even includes a DNR Perfect promotional tape featuring animated characters taking a vacuum cleaner to the picture to get rid of unwanted picture noise. In the tape, the M-782 stands before a family in a blue cloudy sky, backlit by the sun in a scene that could be from the Rapture or



**A. All the DNR Perfect function did was make a bad recording look slightly better.**  
**B. Yep, that's the back all right.**



you squeeze the best images out of a limited format? Toshiba's answer is their V3 technology, which starts with a preamp on the head drum, jacking up the signal strength before any noise can be introduced. V3 decks have fewer parts, therefore less breakdowns, or so the theory goes. The third piece of V3 technology is the feature Toshiba is touting the most—DNR Perfect, noise reduction circuitry that cleans up old tapes and tapes recorded in SLP mode, and improves playback on big screens.

one of William Hurt's hallucinations in *Altered States*, the Oracle of the New Age. Ah, marketing. The New Age will not be televised, at least not in 240 lines of VHS resolution.

I started out by making a recording of some test patterns, as well as the first 10 minutes of *Benny & Joon*. Then I looked at the footage through a Dwin projector with a line doubler, not a very nice thing to do to any VHS VCR. The promise of DNR Perfect technology was not apparent on the big screen. Turning it on produced a slight improvement similar to

adjusting the sharpness a couple of notches, but it still looked like blown-up VHS. While looking at a noisy old tape, Al and I could see a difference with DNR on and off, but going from a crappy original tape to a slightly less crappy one didn't make me a believer. DNR Perfect is available only in playback mode, so it has no effect while making a recording.

It was when I switched to our reference TV, the Sony KV-32XBR100, that the Toshiba showed its worth. The color bars were a little soft, which is to be expected, but the picture looked excellent. The color did not bleed, even on reds, and flesh tones looked good. This might be attributed to Toshiba's Color Signal Enhancement circuitry, which the company claims cuts down on color bleeding. In a blind test, I might think I was looking at a laserdisc player, at least on the 32-inch TV. We saw some chroma PM noise on a magenta test screen, but that didn't translate into problems when viewing a tape. It was a whole different world. I could see myself standing in awe before the big M-782 in the sky.

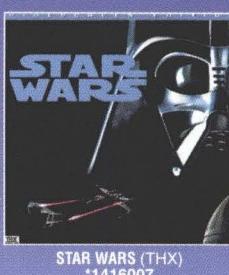
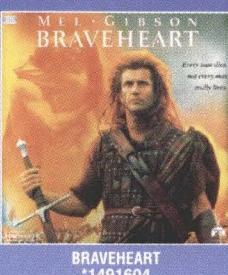
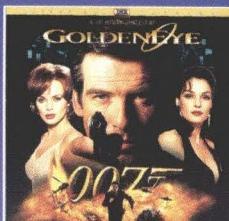
To check out the hi-fi audio on the M-782, I recorded the excellent "You Bowed Down" from the latest Elvis Costello CD, *All This Useless Beauty*. The deck reproduced the sound of the disc to my satisfaction. I detected very little hiss added to the original. I also recorded an action sequence from the *Streets of Fire* laserdisc in

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Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls	*1490309
Tremors 2: Aftershocks	*1507805

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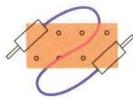
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GEAR GUIDE

## Toshiba M-782 VCR

Dolby Surround, and found the sound to be very good, with no distortion on more demanding parts of the soundtrack.

The M-782 sports six heads, the extra two for the 19-micron heads, solely dedicated to SLP recording and playback. With the 19-micron heads in use, the company claims its SLP picture rivals the picture in SP mode. I was skeptical, but I gave it a chance. The difference with the 19-micron heads on and off while viewing a tape made in SLP mode was negligible. An SLP picture is always going to be an SLP picture, right? That's why they call it SLP. It wouldn't look like SLP if humans themselves had 19-micron heads.

Like the previous Toshiba M-781, this deck doesn't have editing features like audio and video dub or flying erase heads. It's intended for home theater, and the picture it produced on the 32-inch Sony suggests it's up to the task.

A fold-out door on the left front panel reveals a record button, channel up/down, DNR on/off, 19-micron head on/off, and front audio/video inputs. The right side has a shuttle dial and buttons for pause, play, and stop. The shuttle dial works in three different modes, stop, playback, and still. When the deck is in play mode, picture search scans at 2x with audio or 5 or 9x without audio,

depending on how far you turn the shuttle dial. From still mode, you can choose slow motion at two speeds in both forward or reverse. The back panel is very basic, with one set of composite inputs and outputs, and antenna in and out.

The remote is very easy to use, with the four main control buttons

laid out in a circle. These same buttons double as the menu controls, and my hand found them easily without looking down. In addition to the VCR, the remote controls a TV, cable box, and a DSS receiver. The VCR changes the channel on your DSS through an infrared emitter. VCR Plus C3 is also available for quick programming with the VCR Plus codes from your local TV listings, but the codes will not work for DSS recording.

Programming is a breeze, though, with the buttons needed for programming set off by themselves under main controls. With the push of one button, the Intel-a-Play II feature turns on your TV and VCR, goes to the correct input and channel, and starts playing. If you push the "Rew/Off" button, the VCR rewinds the tape and turns the TV and VCR off.

Index search inserts an index mark at the beginning of each recording (not from pause), and you can manually insert one during recording. These index points must be more than one minute apart in SP mode,

and more than three minutes apart in SLP mode. Indexing done on another VCR might or might not work.

Other features that make life easier are auto channel programming and a counter function that shifts to a slower speed if you're running out of tape, calculating your preset tape speed and tape length. The menus are easy to navigate, with one-month, six-event programming. MTS (Multichannel TV Sound) broadcasts can be recorded on the right hi-fi track, but you'll lose stereo sound.



**C. All you have to remember to do is get up from the couch with Toshiba's Intel-a-Play II feature, which automatically turns the VCR and TV off.**

### HIGHLIGHTS

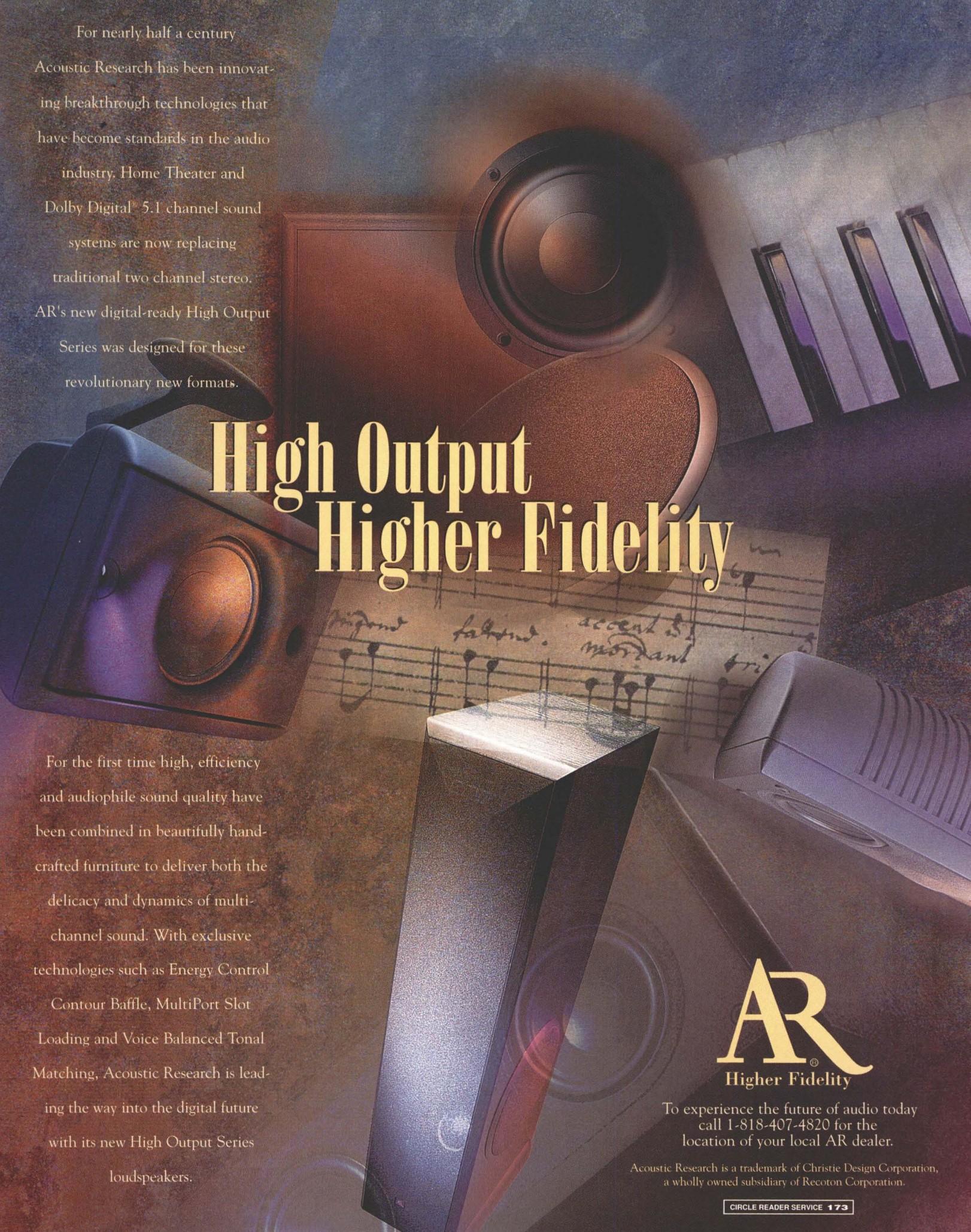
- DNR Perfect noise reduction circuitry
- Dynamite picture quality on smaller screens
- VCR Plus C3 programming
- Well-designed remote control
- DSS control

The Toshiba M-782 produced a damn good picture on our 32-inch Sony TV. If you have a tube TV and don't like paying extra for S-video tape, this is a good choice for a VCR. The programming features are there, plus it's easy to use. 

#### Toshiba M-782 Hi-Fi VHS VCR \$600

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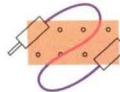
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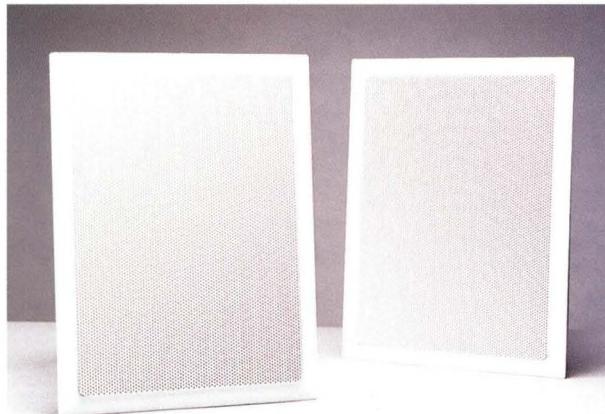


# Legend Audio Model 4000 In-Wall Speakers

The Holy Grail it ain't, but it is a *really* good in-wall speaker at a *really* good price.

by Brent Butterworth

I love it when things start to get good—like when a promising young sax player breaks free of the old jazz clichés and starts coming up with wild new stuff of his own. That's 'cause it's even more fun to like something when you used to hate it.



**Legend Audio's Model 4000 in-walls ranked right up there in sound quality with our favorites, B&W's Signature 7s.**

In-wall speakers are going through the same stage right now. Everybody who's serious about audio hates them, and with *very* good reason. Most cram them full of el cheapo components, bolt 'em to a flimsy plastic baffle, and call it a day. Legend Audio's trying to fight the "all in-walls suck" bias out there by using premium drivers in its in-wall speakers. The company's \$550/pair Model 4000 uses drivers from two highly respected manufacturers: a 1½-inch

silk-dome tweeter from Dynaudio, and an 8½-inch poly-cone woofer from Vifa. These are the kind of components you'd find in very high-end speakers; seeing them in a half-kilobuck in-wall gave me quite a surprise.

The only in-walls I've ever heard that I liked are the B&W Signature 7 and the Sonance D6000 (we tested both of these nearly \$1,000/pair speakers in our November '95 Face Off), and I definitely didn't expect a \$550 pair to join their ranks. But this one did. From the lower midrange on up, the 4000s sounded really smooth on recording after recording, with both male and female voices. In fact, I haven't heard the vocal on Holly Cole's *Temptation* CD sound significantly smoother from *any* speaker in this price range, much less an in-wall. They were a little bright overall, but I had them mounted about 4 feet off the ground. Mounted where they're actually likely to be used—about 7 feet off the ground—they produce a softer treble.

Through the 4000s, most bass lines were very distinct, although I found several notes that boomed out. I suspect that's the wall resonating—you can sense the wall sort of "singing along" on certain CDs. This is the only place the 4000s could probably be improved. I'd love to hear the same drivers mounted in a heavy aluminum

baffle like the one B&W uses for the Signature 7; the heavy baffle helps dampen the wall vibration and tighten up the bass response.

These are no miracle, though, because they still sound like in-walls.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Great drivers = great sound (at least in this case)
- No imaging, but smooth mids
- Sturdy mounting accessories
- Reasonable price for a good-sounding in-wall

That is to say, they don't image—the wall surrounding the speaker reflects so much sound that most of the stereo imaging is obscured. It was weird to listen to music in such a flat, 1-D perspective, and nowhere near as involving as listening to a good pair of conventional speakers. For casual listening, that doesn't matter, though, and for home theater, where all the ambience comes from the surround speakers, I bet the 4000s would really shine.

If, like some HT readers, I *had* to get in-walls (like if I got married or something), I think I could live with these. ☺

**Legend Audio Model 4000 In-Wall Speakers**

\$550/pair

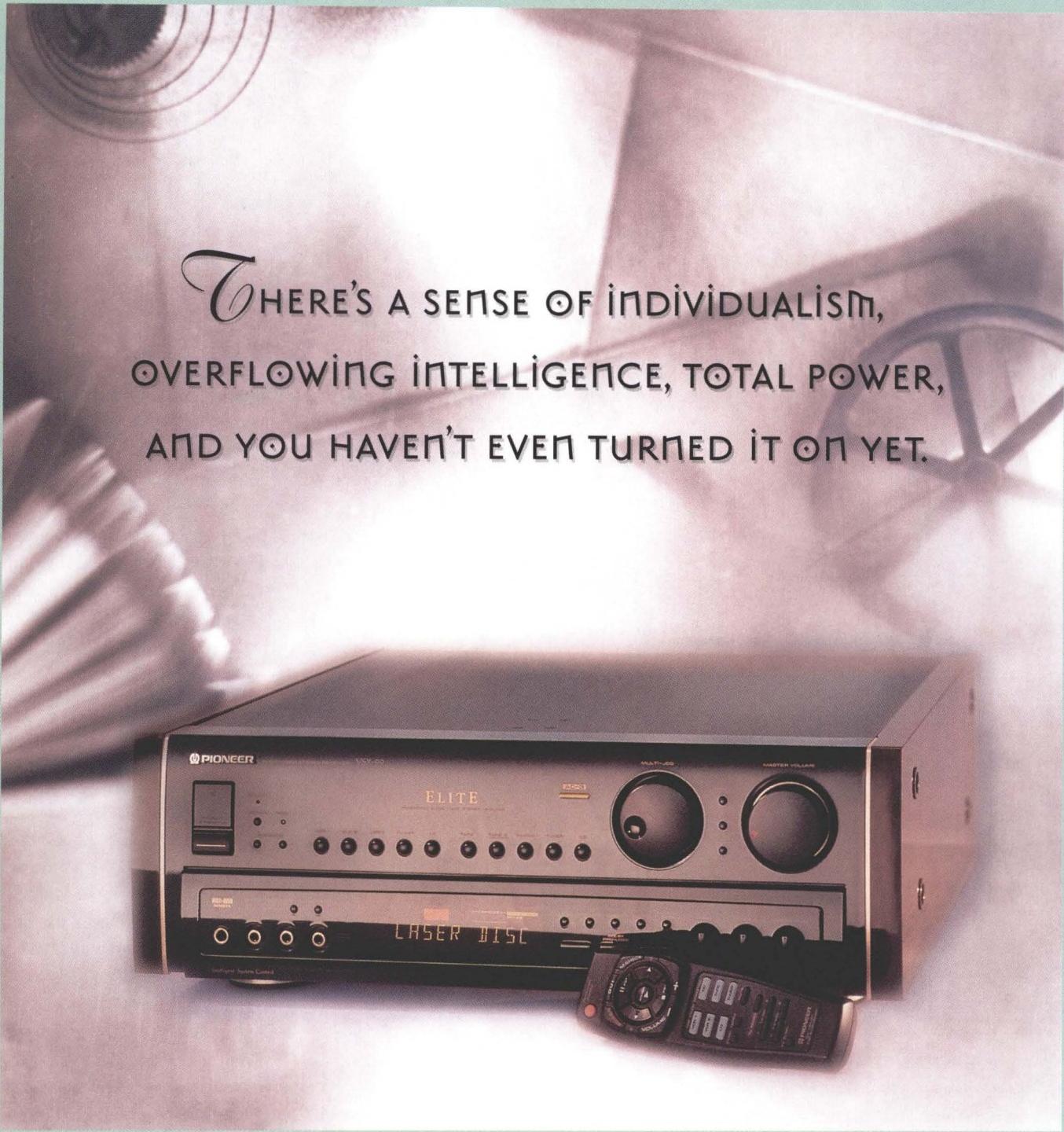
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**ELITE**  
BY PIONEER



# Can Wireless Really Work?

The squeaky wheel gets the grease, so when we complained about wireless speakers, the mechanics came out in force.

by Brent Butterworth



Cordero Studios

**Not only do Paradox's TRX7000s have the largest range we've run across in wireless speakers, but they have decent sound, too.**

Early this year, I wrote a column about wireless speakers—how they offered tremendous promise, but fell short of our expectations. In a home theater, wireless could theoretically work wonders, because it'd eliminate that messy, time-consuming task of running speaker cable across your room and back to the surround speakers. But in practice, the wireless systems we've seen have all suffered major drawbacks.

In that February '96 article, I discussed a Chase Technology system that had a great transmitter/receiver, but lousy, underpowered speakers; a Recoton system that had an OK speaker, but a lousy, noisy transmitter; and a JBL system that offered a great transmitter/receiver combo (with no speakers), but cost the princely sum of \$500. At the end of the article, I asked why a manufacturer couldn't combine a good transmitter like the one in the Chase with a decent little set of

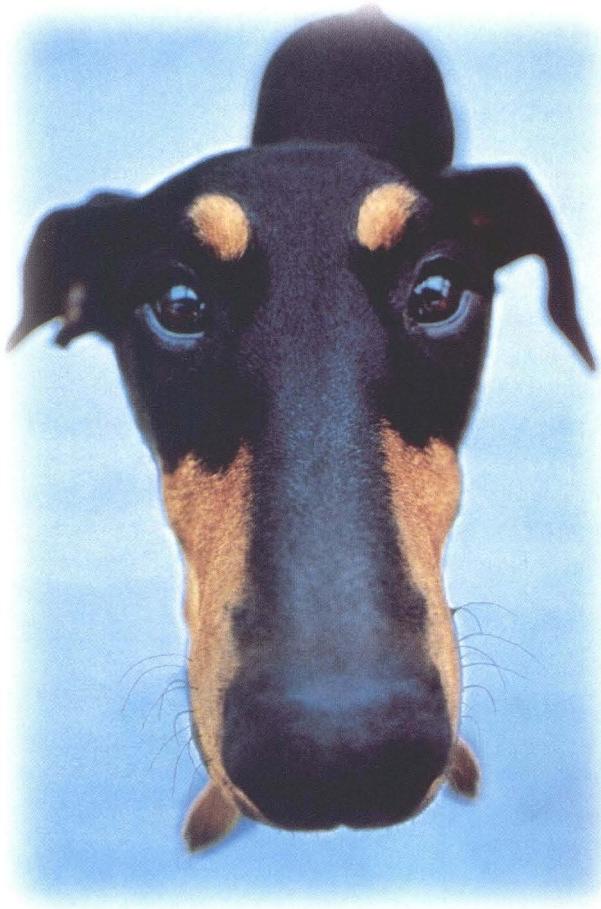
speakers, and sell the pair for a reasonable price.

And I got a few answers. A few manufacturers called to tell me, "Oh, we're working on that, and when it's done, we'll get one to you right away." But two called to tell me, "We've got one—can we bring it over to you?" The first was RF-Link, who brought us the impressive \$200 Wavecom Jr. audio/video transmitter we featured in our July '96 Premiere Designs photo spread. The other was a company I'd never heard of called Paradox. "Sure," I told Paradox president Jim Duncan, "bring 'em over," expecting to receive a system that performed only marginally better than the ones I'd tried.

When he arrived, Duncan refused to be intimidated by the roomful of high-end gear I led him into; he simply pulled his speakers out of this slick-looking little carrying bag, took down the Mordaunt-Short speakers I'd been listening to, set up his little \$400 TRX7000 wireless speakers on the same stands, and plugged the transmitter into the Chiro C-800 processor I was using. "Play 'em," he said, making none of the usual apologies, excuses, or explanations you hear from guys who make budget-priced components.

Each TRX7000 comprises a very solid molded-plastic cabinet, with a 2-inch mylar cone tweeter and a 4-inch polycone woofer. There's an 11-watt amp and a receiver built into each speaker. The Chase and Recoton systems have left/right/mono switches that let you use them for either stereo channel,

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## Can Wireless Really Work?

or just use one speaker for mono listening. The TRX7000 lacks this feature, so they're hard-wired for either left- or right-channel use. This is the only feature I really missed—I love using one of the Chase speakers in my bathroom, which isn't big enough to fit two speakers easily, and certainly not big enough to set up the speakers for good stereo imaging.

There's a transmitter you connect to your source device, and which transmits the audio signal to the speakers. The transmitter's the prize of the package; with its cool, space-age styling, it's certainly a huge aesthetic improvement over the Chase system's vaguely obscene-looking transmitter. The system transmits in the 900-megahertz band, which you've probably heard discussed in ads for cordless phones. This band is generally the best available to consumers for wireless transmission, although the JBL system certainly works very well down in the 50-megahertz region.

**They actually do a pretty good job with stereo imaging, creating a reasonable sonic facsimile of instruments actually playing in the room with you.**

You can hook up the transmitter to the line-level surround-channel outputs of your receiver or preamp/processor, or for multiroom use, where you're using the speakers to provide stereo sound in another room, you can hook up the transmitter to one of the recording outputs on the back of your receiver or pre/pro. Or if you're just using it with a single source device (as

I do with my Chase system, which only receives sound from the laserdisc player), you can just plug it into that source device. Of course, your source device needs to have a second set of audio outputs for this scheme to work, but with laserdisc players, at least, that's seldom a problem. If you wanted to get really industrious, you could hook up a stereo line-level switcher between the transmitter, the surround-channel output, and the recording output, so you could switch between surround-channel use and multiroom use.

The basic system—transmitter, two speakers, and AC adapters for all three—costs \$400, which seems pretty reasonable, because the less expensive, underperforming wireless systems I discussed in the previous article sell for prices in the \$250 range. Paradox also offers a number of really nice options. You can get a set of rechargeable batteries for the speakers for an extra \$100; Duncan says they'll run about 8 to 10 hours on a full charge at medium volume. The batteries

would make the system perfect for taking out onto the patio for a relaxed summer afternoon of music listening, or out into the

garage while you're working on your car. You can also get a set of expansion speakers (without the transmitter) for \$300/pair, and a separate transmitter for \$125. These are great options for those who want to, say, use one set of wireless speakers for the surrounds, and another set in the kitchen. Last, you can pick up the snappy carrying bag for the system for \$80.

### The Test

I was pleasantly surprised when Duncan powered up the TRX7000s. I first listened to them with no sound playing, to see if they would produce any of the annoying, stray radio noise (or "RF burps") I've heard from many wireless speakers—little squawks and spurts of sound you hear when the system's turned on, but not receiving a signal. To my delight, they didn't, even though our listening room is in L.A.'s radio-frequency-saturated San Fernando Valley. Test phase one passed.

For test phase two, I put on a series of vocal CDs, which tend to reveal the flaws of cheap speakers quickly—usually, the cheap components and hastily designed crossovers in these speakers give voices an unpleasant, raspy edge. The TRX7000s passed this test, too. Thanks in part to the 2-inch cone tweeter, they have a slight treble roll-off, which makes them pleasant and unfatiguing to listen to, and which makes voices sound a little more natural. The speakers actually do a pretty good job with stereo imaging, creating a reasonable sonic facsimile of instruments actually playing in the room with you.

Where they start to sound like a \$400 set of wireless speakers is in the bass, which is OK for surround-channel use in a Pro Logic surround sound system, and acceptable for background music listening, but a far cry from what you get from a good minispeaker like PSB's Alpha. They also don't sound as natural in the midrange as the Alpha, or as other over-



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achieving minis like NHT's SuperZero, and they don't seem to have as smooth a frequency response as better minispeakers do. Basically, the TRX7000s sound like an OK-quality budget speaker—not outstanding, but far from offensive. And for a wireless speaker (powered only by a little 11-watt internal amp, not a big receiver), that's a genuine breakthrough.

For test phase three, I tried carrying one of the battery-powered speakers out into other rooms of our testing facility to see what kind of range the transmitter offers. It still sounded good and practically noise-free at the other end of the offices (about 60 feet away), which is the place most wireless speakers really start to drop out. But to my surprise, the speaker continued to work when I carried it outside into the parking lot. It finally started to cut out at a distance of about 150 feet from the transmitter, which is the most range I've ever coaxed from a set of wireless speakers.

### Why Go Wireless?

Even though the Paradox system's clearly the best wireless speaker system I've tried (and probably the best available at the moment), why would it make sense to use it? That depends on your system. If you've got a high-end surround sound system with Dolby Digital (which has full 20 Hertz to 20 kilohertz range in the surround channel), you probably don't want to use the TRX7000 in your surround channel—you'll lose important sonic information in both the bass

and the treble, and you'd be better off hooking up some good conventional speakers in the back with decent-quality wire. (If you don't want to confront the difficulty of running the wires back to the surround speakers in a cosmetically appealing way, just pay a custom installer a couple hundred bucks to do it.) But for Pro Logic systems, where the surround information runs from only 100 Hz to 7 kHz, wireless makes sense.

For plain music listening, the TRX7000s definitely perform well enough to keep most people happy, at least in the kitchen or bedroom, where you don't usually listen to music loudly enough to perceive the benefits of high-quality sound. If you're at all picky about the sound in the other rooms, though, or if you still like to listen to music at moderate (or higher) volume in those rooms, you're better off paying an installer to run the wire through your walls, and picking up a pair of PSB Alphas or some other good minispeaker.

Those who do decide to go wireless can't do better than the TRX7000. With its reasonable price, good-sounding speakers, and excellent transmission/reception quality, it's clearly the hottest ticket going in wireless sound.

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# The Ultimate

This two-part article, featuring contributing editors Rebecca Day on hardware and Frank

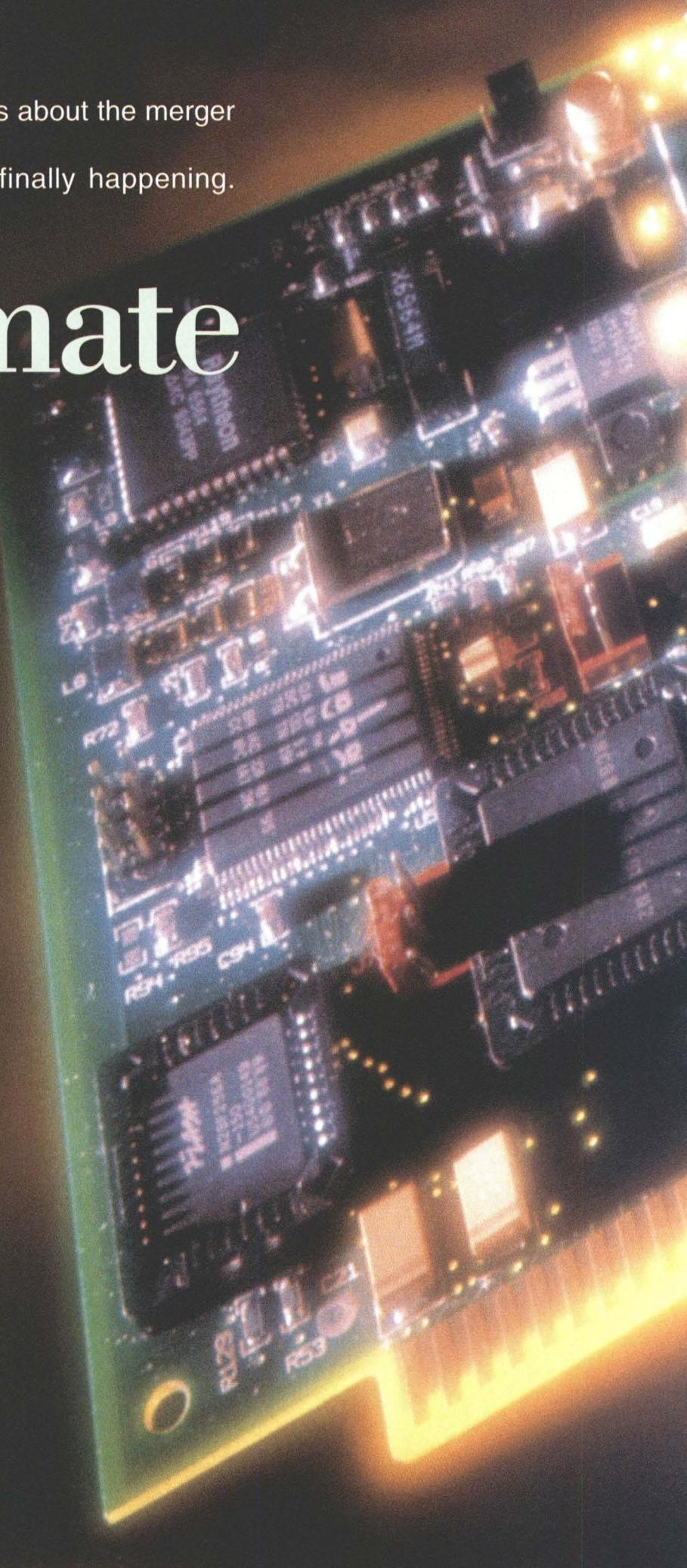
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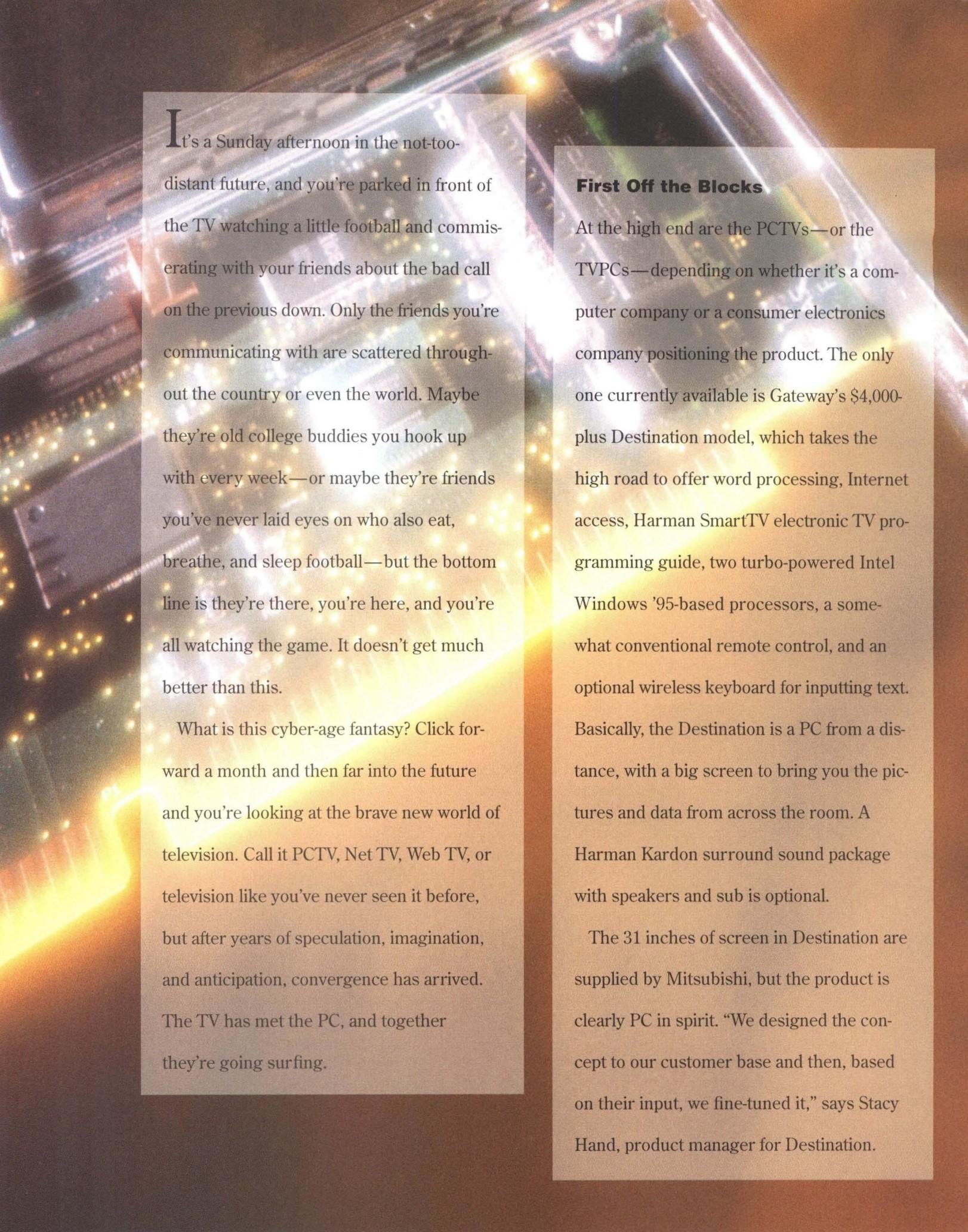
Beacham on delivery systems, explains how (and why) you'll soon be cruising the Web on

# Merger

your TV and watching *Seinfeld* on your computer.

by *Rebecca Day*





**I**t's a Sunday afternoon in the not-too-distant future, and you're parked in front of the TV watching a little football and commiserating with your friends about the bad call on the previous down. Only the friends you're communicating with are scattered throughout the country or even the world. Maybe they're old college buddies you hook up with every week—or maybe they're friends you've never laid eyes on who also eat, breathe, and sleep football—but the bottom line is they're there, you're here, and you're all watching the game. It doesn't get much better than this.

What is this cyber-age fantasy? Click forward a month and then far into the future and you're looking at the brave new world of television. Call it PCTV, Net TV, Web TV, or television like you've never seen it before, but after years of speculation, imagination, and anticipation, convergence has arrived. The TV has met the PC, and together they're going surfing.

### **First Off the Blocks**

At the high end are the PCTVs—or the TVPCs—depending on whether it's a computer company or a consumer electronics company positioning the product. The only one currently available is Gateway's \$4,000-plus Destination model, which takes the high road to offer word processing, Internet access, Harman SmartTV electronic TV programming guide, two turbo-powered Intel Windows '95-based processors, a somewhat conventional remote control, and an optional wireless keyboard for inputting text. Basically, the Destination is a PC from a distance, with a big screen to bring you the pictures and data from across the room. A Harman Kardon surround sound package with speakers and sub is optional.

The 31 inches of screen in Destination are supplied by Mitsubishi, but the product is clearly PC in spirit. "We designed the concept to our customer base and then, based on their input, we fine-tuned it," says Stacy Hand, product manager for Destination.

# The Ultimate Media Merger

The tube uses a VGA-quality, non-interlaced screen, which is partly responsible for the product's high price tag. But when you're dealing with graphics and text in a living room setting, you'd better be able to read the screen comfortably; the interlaced monitors you get with conventional TVs deliver blurry text and a flicker that make Web browsing practically impossible, so the tradeoff is worth it.

Gateway makes it clear that Destination isn't for everybody. "Our target is the technically savvy individual making \$50,000-plus a year with five to seven years' PC experience," Hand says. "If you have a family, better yet, because the big-screen PC is designed for group activity." As prices for components and comparable computers drop, prices for Destination will drop as well, fueling even further drops resulting from manufacturing-cost efficiencies as volume ramps up to meet heightened demand, Gateway predicts. As that happens, Hand believes, "We'll draw in people with less experience in PCs."

## The Non-Geek Solution

Gateway's Destination is truly a Windows '95-based system with all the pluses and minuses of the latest generation Microsoft operating system. The only delay times home theater

users are accustomed to dealing with are the ones in the rear channel of surround sound systems, which are measured in milliseconds. Delay times on PC products can seem interminable when you're waiting for the system to boot up, then switching applications, and then accessing the Web. Then there are the foreboding warnings of fatal system errors and other Windows lockups. It's bad enough to have to deal with them when you're in the office; consumer electronics companies believe those kinds of glitches in the entertainment room could turn off the majority of the population that's not online—for good.

"We don't want the consumer to buy this product, take it home, and expect to turn it on and watch the election results on their 31-inch TV, and then have to deal with all of these wacky PC conventions," says Lou Lenzi, vice president of America's design operations for Thomson Consumer Electronics. Thomson has joined forces with Compaq to create a PCTV product so simple that it belies its computer power. "If customers have to wait for the hard drive to get up to speed and then get General Protection Fault messages," he says, "then nobody wins." The immense

power of the Intel microprocessor, he says, will be "buried" in the RCA Genius Theater.

Timely response and idiot-proof operation of the convergence machine is the top priority for the Thomson/Compaq alliance. Lenzi envisions caching Website software on the hard drive to accelerate access time. The strategy would also apply to conceptual links to other Web-related sites. "Our thinking is that rather than using a phone line every time you want to access a Website, why don't we cache to logical links on the hard drive," he says. "That's where storage is going to be very important."

Lenzi predicts at least 1.5 gigabytes and maybe even 2.6 gigabytes of storage space, along with a 36-inch noninterlaced VGA-quality monitor, operating software, a wireless keyboard, a separate remote control with trackball, a high-octane Pentium processor, 28.8-kbps modem and sufficient RAM to handle multiple tasks efficiently. PIP would enable you to view different applications simultaneously. A printer port is likely, and a CD-ROM drive and other A/V components are optional. At \$5,000 or so, it's not for the price squeamish.

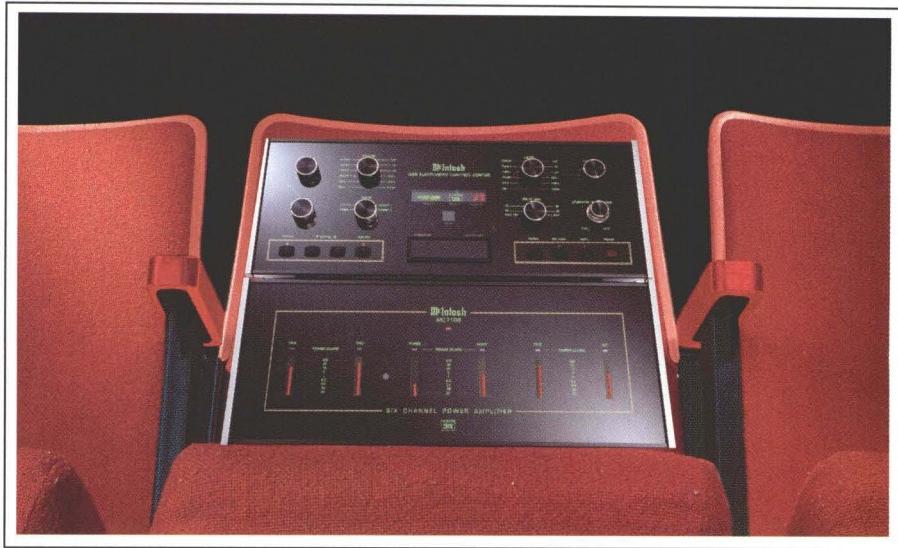
The first iteration of Genius TV will be the statement piece for a full range of PCTV-type products from RCA. The entry level of PCTV is happening now, Lenzi says, in the form of the company's StarSight-equipped DSS, which introduces satellite users to the concept of interactive TV. StarSight's new Electronic News Guide has added information services to its onscreen program guide, which gets viewers accustomed to using the TV as a text-based information retrieval system.

It's the middle level of Internet TV that offers the most interesting potential for new product creations, according to Lenzi. It's also the fuzziest. He imagines a TV with a built-in modem that bundles StarSight for its programming guide with local news, weather, and sports. "This type of product might offer limited interactivity that may meet the needs of the majority of our customers without a lot of hardware overload."

Then there's the Home-Based Assistant, an under-cabinet kitchen appliance that will take advantage of broad-bandwidth pipelines when they begin to come into the home over the next few years. The Assistant sports a flip-down screen, a modem, and a DVD player that could enable homeowners to bank by phone; store a database of phone numbers that's integrated with the phone; store recipes; control home climate and lighting; and provide interactive shopping.



**Gateway's Destination is the only PC-television hybrid currently on the market.**



# The McIntosh of Home Theater.

There are two distinct considerations when specifying a Home Theater system: sound quality and theatrical effects. The foreign-built brands try to cram in as many features as possible, while the American high-end community makes only token accommodations to the serious viewers' needs.

McIntosh brings a whole new level of

performance and quality to the audio/video category. A "no-compromise" philosophy that combines a 50-year heritage for producing the finest sound with functionality, spatial circuit design and build quality that is second to none. So, there are still two considerations when choosing a Home Theater: McIntosh and all the others.



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## The Ultimate Media Merger

"We're going to come up with things that are not obvious now," Lenzi says. "When we have digital transmission in and out of the home, then anything's going to be possible."

As contributing editor Frank Beacham describes in the next article, the broad-bandwidth two-way bridge will come in a variety of forms: digital cable and wireless cable modems, ISDN lines, TV broadcasts, and DSS. Compaq and Thomson, not surprisingly, are betting on DSS to be the pipeline. When the pipelines are in place, consumers will really start to see the benefits of digital TV, says Susan Vinci, director of product planning in Compaq's emerging products group. Tangible results will be richer viewing from improved colors and graphics as well as true interactivity.

Vinci, whose group was chartered to find new directions for PC-based products, sees various PC-based products throughout the home. Like the PCTV, she says, all will be subsets of the PC but offer limited applications for more personalized use, like kitchen functions and home banking. "Consumers today are looking for all they can do with meaningful clusters of functions," she says. The full-featured PC will remain an office- or school-type product, but the power and talents of the latest Pentium-based PCs are vast overkill for most TV-based applications of microprocessor-based appliances. Prices will cascade to affordable price points as expensive components are pulled out of the machines and manufacturing volumes increase.

### Fighting Obsolescence

One issue that needs to be resolved as the two industries converge is the product cycle disparity. Consumers buy a TV and expect it to do its job for at least 10 years, but they've become reluctant participants in the computer industry's 18-month life cycle out of the

**"When we have digital transmission in and out of the home, then anything's going to be possible."**

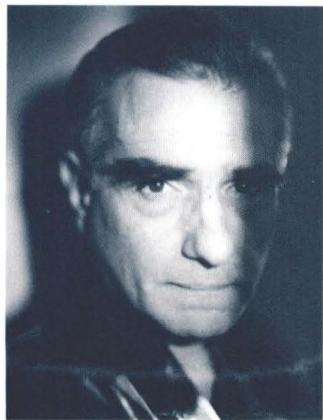
necessity to avoid obsolescence. As a company trying to bridge the gap between consumer electronics and PCs, Compaq expects a little give on both ends. "As the pipeline gets bigger, it will be practical to have storage on the network and not as much on the local devices," Vinci predicts, which is one way to make the electronics less expensive to replace.

Another way is a modular approach to PC design. Once the hi-res screen is in place, consumers will have the backbone of their PCTV, Vinci says. "Then you can change out the key components as necessary to stay up to date," she says. An example is CD-ROM, which will be the starter platform for the Compaq/RCA products, but later on, DVD will replace CD-ROM in the stack. Swapping will be a snap, she says, as a result of a standard plug that will enable easy upgrades. Modems, too, will be portions of the package consumers will want to beef up as new speeds and pipelines allow. "Down the line, you'll see 33.6-kbps modems, and again a standard plug will let you upgrade to a DSS modem," Vinci predicts.

The limited-function products RCA and Gateway see way down the road, Diba Systems plans to bring to market by the end of the year. With roots in Apple and Oracle, Diba developed NetVision, the software that's behind Zenith's imminent NetVision TV. NetVision will hit stores in the form of products and appliances branded with high-profile names. Zenith's \$899 NetVision TV, due out in the fall, is armed with a 28.8-kbps modem, e-mail capability, a trackball-based remote, and an optional wireless keyboard.

"With NetVision, we're saying that we need to blow up the computer and cherry-pick the applications people want to use," Gillach says. "Only 9 percent of households are online. If you take the other 91 percent and give them an easy way to the Internet, then you're helping people into the information age. You're going to see a lot of other companies coming out with these types of products, and our middleware is going to be the enabling technology. What Windows is to the PC world," he boldly predicts, "we are going to be to the consumer electronics world."

Despite its Silicon Valley address, Diba spurns the idea of a PC in the living room and doesn't believe prices for Windows-based Gateway and Genius Theater systems are feasible. "Microsoft has never been a broad software platform for the consumer electronics industry, and the next wave is going to be even more computer based," Gillach maintains. So Diba is targeting its Ethernet-based network system at mass-market consumer electronics companies like Samsung, GoldStar, Sharp, Mitsubishi, NEC, and Toshiba. Thus far, he says, focus groups have identified 41 potential product implementations of the Java-oriented network technology. With Java compatibility and an Ethernet port that will accept digital cable modems, NetVision appears to be ready for the future.



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## The Ultimate Media Merger

Diba's tack is to make its convergence technology appliance-oriented toward a single use as opposed to bundled into a multifunction PC that's already far more powerful than the mainstream consumer can appreciate or make use of. "The Gateway system is phenomenally expensive for a PC with a TV output," Gillach says. "It's absolute overkill for what people want to do in the living room," he says. Diba's research says people want to do a couple of things with their living room entertainment systems that they can't do now: play games with other people on a network, send e-mail, and surf the Net."

And that's what NetVision products promise to do. The supplied remote control will have two buttons at the top that users will press to toggle between TV and Internet. To access icons from the Net they'll use directional keys to control a cursor. The optional keyboard will be required for inputting text. NetVision provides about 2 to 3 megabytes of storage, which translates to about 100 text-intensive pages of information. Gillach says rather than store data most people use bookmarks to access favorite places on the Web quickly—which NetVision will enable users to do.

NetVision will also be in set-top boxes by the end of the year, Gillach says, which could be available at retail at somewhere well above its manufacturing cost of \$150 per box. He's also hoping that telephone and utility companies will use the cellular phone distribution model to get into the lucrative information services business. His dream is this: A regional Bell operating company (RBOC) gives away or sells at a low cost the NetVision set-top box in exchange for a long-term Internet service pact at \$19.95 a month. NetVision is

**The industry needs to provide consumers with a consistent means of accessing information.**

ISP-transparent, he says, and users who buy it at retail will choose their own Internet provider.

Companies including Philips, Hitachi, Sony, Mitsubishi, and Sharp also have a close eye on this emerging category of convergence products and will launch products over the next year as well. Sony and Philips have thrown their weight behind a scheme called WebTV, which is covered in the next article.

Sharp is in a unique position, with a variety of devices that will benefit from the Internet explosion,

including TVs, computers, and personal digital assistants. Look for the company to deliver products in its TV, computer, and personal digital assistant line that offer Web access, says Philip Abram, who heads up the company's year-old Multimedia Development Center, which also includes the Creative Lifestyle Focus Center in Mahwah, New Jersey.

Right now, Abram says, access to the Internet is a computer-centric method of gaining information. Using information collected and interpreted by the CLFC, Sharp is also noodling with possibilities for handheld devices and other ways to get that same information. "We want to know who would value the information as well on their TV instead of their computer or in addition to their computer, and we're trying to deliver products that meet those needs," Abram says.

The first results of the group's efforts will appear within a year, Abram says. He sees a variety of opportunities for the PCTV-type device. "If you're looking at people's living rooms, for example, you can see the trend toward larger TVs," he says, "but people are also buying smaller TVs for secondary rooms. If they're going to be using these devices there, then you have to think about that."

Overall, he says, the industry needs to provide consumers with a consistent means of accessing information. "That's when multimedia will begin to make sense to consumers—when it comes to them and they don't have to go to it," he says.

With everybody talking about some kind of convergence product, but no industry standards, the stage is being set for major market confusion. Confusion translates to market stagnation as consumers wait for a clear winner to emerge. In addition, if the PCTV products are marketed one way and come up short, that could also impact the initial success of the category. The consumer electronics industry has seen such confusion in the Beta/VHS format war, and the computer industry saw the effects of incompatibility and over-hype with multimedia products.

"The dangers we see are the product being over-hyped," says Compaq's Vinci. "If companies make promises that the consumer doesn't believe live up to the promised ease of use or perceived value, then they won't buy anything. It's really important for the industry leaders to get out there and create a standard. We're going to kill the category if we don't agree on a way to be connected." ☀



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# Race

age: the “wired” living room.

by Frank Beacham



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## The Great Bandwidth Race

Web pages and other Internet data now accessible only by personal computer. This is why so many investors are betting that the combination of full-motion video with the Internet's hyperlinking capability and powerful graphical databases will lead to new forms of lucrative entertainment programming. The trend is blurring the already fuzzy line between broadcast television viewing systems and personal computers.

For example, television receiver manufacturers such as Thomson Consumer Electronics (RCA, ProScan, and GE brands), Zenith (with its new Inteq brand), Sony, and others are planning new home theater products that include Internet access. At the same time, computer giants like Microsoft, Intel, and Compaq are introducing new broadcast-friendly personal computers.



**The only accessory  
you'll need to use  
TV On-line is a wire-  
less keyboard.**

"There's a TV-centric platform and a PC-centric platform developing for the Internet," says Hal Krisbergh, a veteran cable-industry executive and former president of General Instruments' Communications Division. That means, according to Krisbergh, that certain types of Internet content will be created for big-screen viewing in the living room while other content is designed for access by a personal computer on a desktop.

"TV viewers are going to be able to access Web pages, advertisers, and information on sporting events

that they are watching," says Krisbergh. "All sorts of very interesting things will happen on the TV-centric entertainment platform."

The recent announcement that Thomson Consumer Electronics would team with Compaq Computer to develop a new generation of home entertainment products recognized the fast-approaching new era of data-enhanced broadcasting. "We envision an initial direction of highly featured products that will particularly appeal to video enthusiasts and computer-experienced consumers who enjoy the home theater experience," says Joseph P. Clayton, Thomson's executive VP of sales and marketing. "Internet capability will be just one application that will transform the private experience of the PC to an entertainment and information experience that can be shared by the entire family."

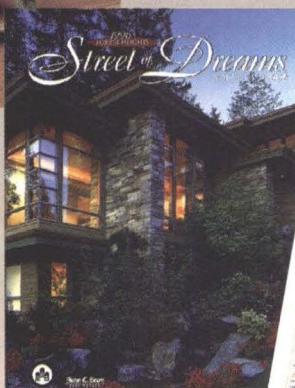
Currently, most Internet access to the home is limited to a glacially slow 14.4- or 28.8-bits-per-second modem connection over a standard dial-up phone line. It's at this bottleneck that competition is most intense. Wired and wireless cable TV operators, direct-to-home satellite services, broadcasters, and telephone companies are furiously working to unleash the data.

"I think the bandwidth break will come sometime next year," says John Warnock, CEO of Adobe Systems, a leading manufacturer of design software for the creation of Internet Web sites. Adobe, he says, is already hard at work planning for a new generation of authoring tools that incorporate video content within Web pages.

Though nearly everyone has a favorite, it's still a very open question as to which companies and technologies will lead the pack in bringing high-speed Internet access to the home. The air is thick with hype these days. New technology announcements come almost weekly. Old assumptions fall fast. Here are a few leading contenders:

### **Wired Cable**

If you paid attention to popular media these days, you'd think every home in America was about to get a two-way, high-speed Internet connection from the local cable company. Wrong! Tests of two-way cable modems are proceeding in selected markets, but this technology faces a daunting limitation: It works only in newer cable installations that have been specially equipped for two-way traffic. Industry estimates are



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that more than 90 percent of the current cable systems are still one-way, making it impossible for them to use cable modems with an RF return path.

In order to upgrade a cable television plant to two-way capability, the operator must purchase new head-end equipment, new hubs, and new in-line amplifiers. Such upgrades are expensive, ranging from \$400 to

\$700 per customer, plus another \$400 to \$500 for a two-way cable modem.

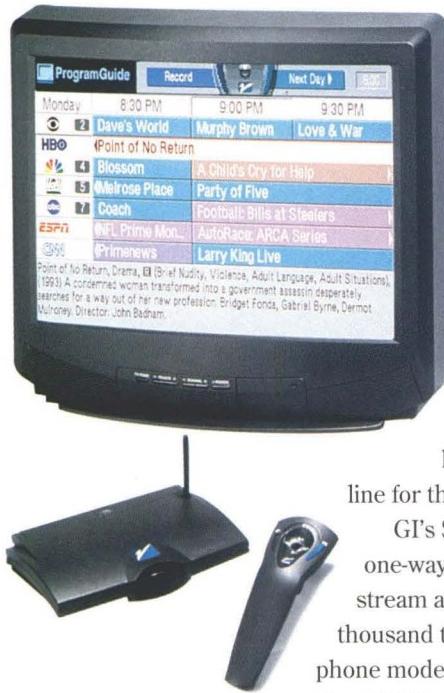
A life raft has been tossed to one-way cable operators by companies like General Instrument, Zenith, and U.S. Robotics. All have announced technology—available now—that allows these older cable systems to use their coaxial delivery system as a high-speed downstream data path to the home and a standard dial-up phone line for the upstream path.

GI's SURFboard technology allows a one-way cable system to deliver data downstream at 27 megabits per second, about a thousand times faster than conventional telephone modem hookups. The cable subscriber with a SURFboard-equipped PC will use a conventional modem connected to a phone line to initiate sessions and make requests to network gateways and servers.

A Zenith/U.S. Robotics alliance has similar technology. A key benefit of the system, they say, is that it allows one-way cable operators to ramp up quickly for data delivery while offering a migration path to full

two-way service when the cable plant is upgraded in the future.

Zenith's cable modem, which will cost about \$400 in quantity, can be configured to operate as a one-way RF/telephone modem now, and then reconfigured remotely to operate as a two-way RF modem when the cable system is upgraded. Thus, the need for a new investment in subscriber equipment is eliminated.



**The information for VideoGuide's interactive program guide is transmitted over Bell South's MobileCom pager network.**

**"People have talked about multimedia so long that it has almost lost its meaning."**

GI has coined the term "videoware" to describe the video-based new media that's expected to be authored for the SURFboard network environment. "People have talked about multimedia so long that it has almost lost its meaning," says Ed Zylka, director of marketing for GI's telecommunications business unit. "What we are really selling here is an interactive network that has been developed for broadcast systems."

## Wireless Cable

Until recently a dark horse, wireless cable is now a good bet as a cost-effective and quickly deployable data delivery system to the home. This much-overlooked technology uses microwave signals in the 2-gigahertz band of radio spectrum to deliver up to 33 analog television channels to homes in line-of-sight of a central transmitting antenna. The low channel capacity, line-of-sight limitation, and interference from trees and other foliage have heretofore made the technology the poor stepchild of wired cable.

Now, however, with the investment of big money from the telephone industry, wireless cable is getting a second look. CAI Wireless Systems, an Albany, New York company backed by Bell Atlantic and Nynex, has begun testing a new, all-digital wireless technology in Washington, D.C. that can send Internet information downstream to home and business PCs at a rate of 10 megabits per second, nearly seven times the rate of today's fastest T1 telephone lines (1.5 mbps). The upstream path from the subscriber's computer uses a standard dial-up phone line.

"Our Internet access service is lightning-fast," says John J. Prisco, president of CAI Wireless. "Anyone frustrated with the agonizing delays associated with surfing the Internet using telephone-based providers will be amazed with our product."

The new CAI digital service, which is scheduled to begin deployment by the end of the year, can accommodate up to 130 digital video and audio channels in addition to Internet access. CAI's rooftop antenna can simultaneously send television programming to a set-top box being designed for the service by Thomson Consumer Electronics, and to a high-speed wireless computer modem built by Hybrid Networks. Unlike Internet services delivered by traditional hard-wire cable programming providers, CAI says, its Internet access will not require customers to subscribe to the company's television channels.

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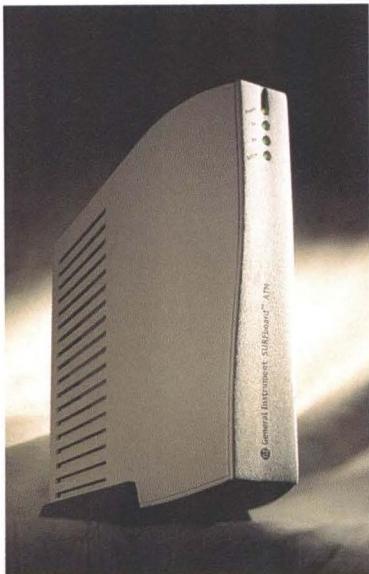
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The digital implementation of wireless, says Prisco, is "remarkably better" than today's analog systems. "With digital technology, you've got a robust network that includes a main transmitter and multiple booster sites." Gone, he says, are the days when analog wireless cable operators "had to erect huge masts and put those barbecue-grill antennas on top so you could get above trees and see the main transmitter. Now we



**General Instruments'**  
**SURFboard technol-**  
**ogy makes a one-**  
**way cable data**  
**delivery system pos-**  
**sible at 27 megabits**  
**per second.**

have multiple antenna sites so the installer has lots of choices." Digital systems, says Prisco, have an "enormous fade margin that means the signal is quite strong and it penetrates foliage. We are seeing over 80-percent coverage in the networks we are deploying. That's getting through a lot of trees."

Wireless cable, says Prisco, has two distinct advantages over competitors such as wired cable and direct-to-home satellite. "It's very inexpensive to deploy the infrastructure—about \$10 per home passed. And it's very quick to market," he says.

Another wireless cable variation for delivering Internet services is being

tested this summer in Lakeland, Florida. In this case, wireless cable is being used for both the send and return feeds, eliminating the need to tie up a telephone line in the home. The downside, when using current analog systems, is that the two-way service offers considerably slower data speeds.

The Lakeland tests are being conducted by American Telecasting, Inc. and People's Choice TV Corp., both wireless cable operators, and equipment manufacturers Zenith, Conifer Corp., and Comwave. The goal is to find a quick and inexpensive way for analog wireless cable systems to offer some form of Internet service.

After the first phase of testing, the companies estimate that by using a sectorized antenna transmission pattern and two wireless channels for downloading the data, Internet access can be offered over an analog wireless cable system to as many as 100,000 subscribers in each market at speeds of at least 128 kilobits per second (about ISDN speed). This capacity and speed, it is expected, can be significantly increased when wireless cable systems are converted to digital operation.

A key part of the Florida testing is the use of sectorized antennas for data transmission. The traditional circular omnidirectional transmission pattern used by wireless cable systems is cut into pie-shaped 7.5-degree segments. By alternating the frequencies used in the segments, the spectrum can be reused and the capacity multiplied by the number of sectors used for each frequency.

### DirecTV

Another major player in the broadband race is DirecTV, the pioneer U.S. provider of digital television programming to the home. Using its national direct-to-home high-power satellite service, the company has announced it will offer limited Internet access for its subscribers this year.

Now partnered with Microsoft, DirecTV also says it is developing a new category of data services to accompany its current programming and a new breed of data-enhanced broadcast television programming. Personal computers equipped with new broadcast video extensions to the Microsoft Windows '95 operating system will also be able to receive and display DirecTV's video programming from the satellite.

### POTV (Plain Old TV)

A lot of late-breaking activity in this category. In the most aggressive move yet to bring Internet access to non-computer users, Sony and Philips have teamed with three former Apple Computer engineers to launch an online service just for TV sets. It will start by using standard telephone line hookup, but is

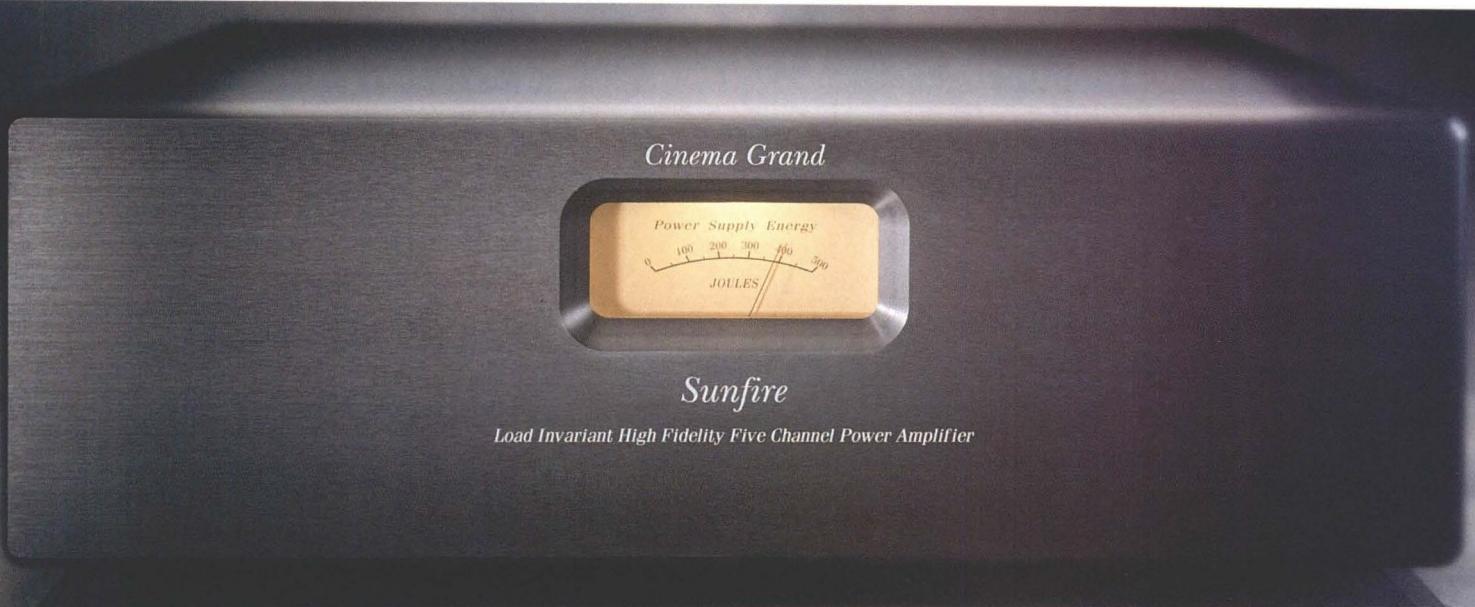
expandable to work with cable modems in the future.

The ambitious new project—called WebTV—is slated for a fall launch. Plug-and-play set-top boxes for the service—to be sold as mass-market consumer products for a few hundred dollars—will go on sale at the same time. The first set-top boxes will be built and sold by Sony and Philips.

Founded in 1995 by three Apple Computer veterans now in their early thirties, WebTV Networks claims it will do what no company has done before: bring simplicity to surfing the Internet. After purchasing a set-top box from a consumer electronics dealer, the user plugs the device into a television set and a standard



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telephone jack. According to WebTV, the user simply turns on the power, and the device automatically finds a phone number, configures itself, and connects to the Internet. The process is so simple, the company claims, that non-technical users can install the equipment, register with the WebTV online service, and begin exploring the Internet within 15 minutes.

WebTV has been designed, its creators say, for natural translation of material designed for computer display to the entertainment television platform. Advanced "TransCache" technology caches, transcodes, re-formats, streams, and reorders Website data for display on television sets. WebTV's features, the company says, make the Internet browsing experience faster and more reliable than current browsing on today's IBM-compatible and Macintosh computers.

In public demonstrations of the new technology, WebTV displayed sharp and flicker-free images of Web pages on standard television receivers. This is the result, the company said, of a new technology called "TVLens" that eliminates interlace flicker without blurring. The process is said to improve perceptual image quality, making text more readable a few feet from the TV screen.

Other WebTV features that add television-like characteristics to Web information are a complete 16-million-color palette; transparency (which enables text and images to appear translucent when they are superimposed on another image); and the use of dissolves, wipes, and cross-fades as transitions between images.

Users interact with WebTV through a thumb-operated remote control or an optional wireless keyboard. The set-top box comes with an internal 33.6 kbps V.34bis modem augmented with "Lineshare" technology that allows incoming calls when WebTV is used on a call waiting-equipped phone. In addition, each set-top box is equipped with a 1.8-gigabit-per-second data port that will allow connection with much faster cable TV modems when that service is available.

Although WebTV complies with today's Internet standards (HTML 3.0 and virtually all Netscape Navi-

gator 3.0 and Microsoft Explorer 3.0 extensions), it is also designed to scale with the Internet through its evolution. Every time a set-top box connects to the WebTV network, it checks for software updates. When new software and HTML extensions are released, the box automatically updates itself by storing the data in flash ROM.

WebTV supports up to five users per household. Each user account is protected by a PIN number and has a personal Internet e-mail address, favorites list, and customized settings. SurfWatch parental controls are included. There's also an ISO Smart Card slot that supports ISO-compliant Visa, Master Card, cash cards, and ATM smart cards.

Other key features include: D-1 quality, 4:2:2 video output; NTSC, PAL, and SECAM support, including WorldScan technology that formats Web content to appear optimally in all TV formats; and full CD-quality audio capability, with integrated RealAudio, MIDI music, and MPEG-1 and -2 audio.

Finally, in this mighty sprint among companies for easier, faster Internet access, Hal Krisbergh and his new company, WorldGate Communications, might be considered the tortoise among the hares. His new technology—called TV On-line, or TVOL—is distinguished by what is not needed for it to work.

Unlike the other proposed cable-type delivery services, the only new equipment required for full Internet access in the subscriber's home is a wireless keyboard that could be delivered through the mail. There is no need for a personal computer, computer monitor, broadband modem, telephone modem, or additional TV set-top appliance. And there are no big monthly bills. TVOL is expected to cost as little as \$4.95 a month while its faster siblings hit \$40 and above.

The downstream path to the TVOL subscriber uses the vertical blanking interval (VBI) of existing video channels and delivers data at a rate of 100 kilobits per second, about three times faster than a conventional 28.8 modem over a dial-up phone line. For two-way cable systems, TVOL uses the cable return path for upstream data at a rate of 20 kilobits per second. For one-way cable systems TVOL will use a conventional phone line and modem for the upstream data. WorldGate's server, located at the cable operator's headend, centralizes the computer processing neces-

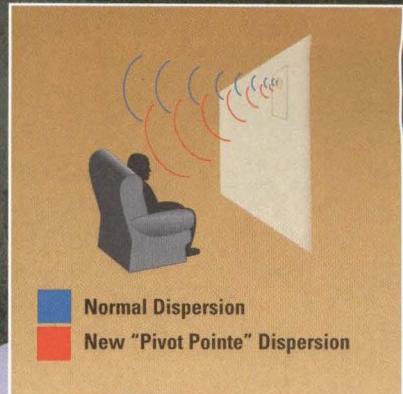


**Zenith's new Inteq line of televisions has Web capabilities already built in.**

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sary to handle communications with the Internet. Proprietary software enables the set-top converter to function as a remote graphics terminal and provides real time two-way communications with the server. The TV set is used instead of a PC monitor. WorldGate said it is working with major converter suppliers to make the necessary software modifications that will enable their converters to be used for the TVOL service.

"Both the RF module and the telephone module already exist," said Dave Wachob, WorldGate vice president and general manager. "They are the same modules the cable converter box already uses for pay-per-view data collection. However, that happens to be a non real-time application. What our software does is allow those modules—both RF and telephone—to operate in real time, which is what's needed for Internet access."

Because the target market for TVOL is the "unconnected," said Wachob, his company has gone to great lengths to keep the new system simple to operate. "For someone who may be intimidated by or can't afford a PC, we've taken any button that looks, smells, or sounds like a PC off that keyboard," he said. "It has the functionality of a typewriter."

Of course, this is only a tiny sampling of the many Internet delivery technologies now under development. Intel's proposed InterCast service will also use the vertical blanking interval to deliver programming to multimedia PCs. Though some major telephone

**"For someone who may be intimidated by a PC, we've taken any button that looks, smells, or sounds like a PC off that keyboard."**

companies are backing wireless cable technology, they continue to be hard at work on new high-speed data technologies for their current wired networks.

Traditional television and radio broadcasters are experimenting with digital services that would allow their existing antennas to broadcast Internet information along with traditional analog programming. And Internet data is being delivered these days by all sorts of means—from pagers to small receivers on wireless packet data networks.

Yet when we fast forward a few years into the future to a time when these new technologies are finally operating, will we—as viewers—experience better programs and services and have greater choice among them? Some leading television programmers are not so sure.

Frustrated by the current industry obsession with digital television technology, some top video programming executives began a spontaneous dialogue on the issue recently at the annual Variety/Schroder Wertheim Big Picture Media Conference in New York City.

Regardless of the "carrier pigeon," audiences are not going to turn on the new digital media devices unless there is something worth watching, said Marcy Carsey, a partner in the Carsey-Werner Company, producers of such network hits as *Roseanne*, *Cybill*, *Grace Under Fire*, and *The Cosby Show*.

"Is all this stuff (technology) making for better shows, better movies, better music?" asked Carsey. "Not yet. Actually I think it might be worse for the time being. Lots of eyes have dropped lots of balls and those balls have to do with storytelling."

Carsey got a nod of agreement on this from a man who began his career by editing short sports films for television syndication on his kitchen table at home. Charles Dolan now heads Cablevision Systems Corp., a leading programming and sports franchise company whose networks include American Movie Classics and Bravo.

"We have been preoccupied as an industry in recent years with the ideas of facility and competition between facilities-based providers. That's part of the move from analog to digital," said Dolan, who also founded Home Box Office in the early 1970s.

Currently, said Dolan, the industry is investing its money in platforms that will offer more choices in programming and information services than most people will ever want. "The fever is passing," he said. "By the end of the decade the platforms will be here and we'll be back to content. What we do about content—each in his own area—will be the way the winners are selected." ☺



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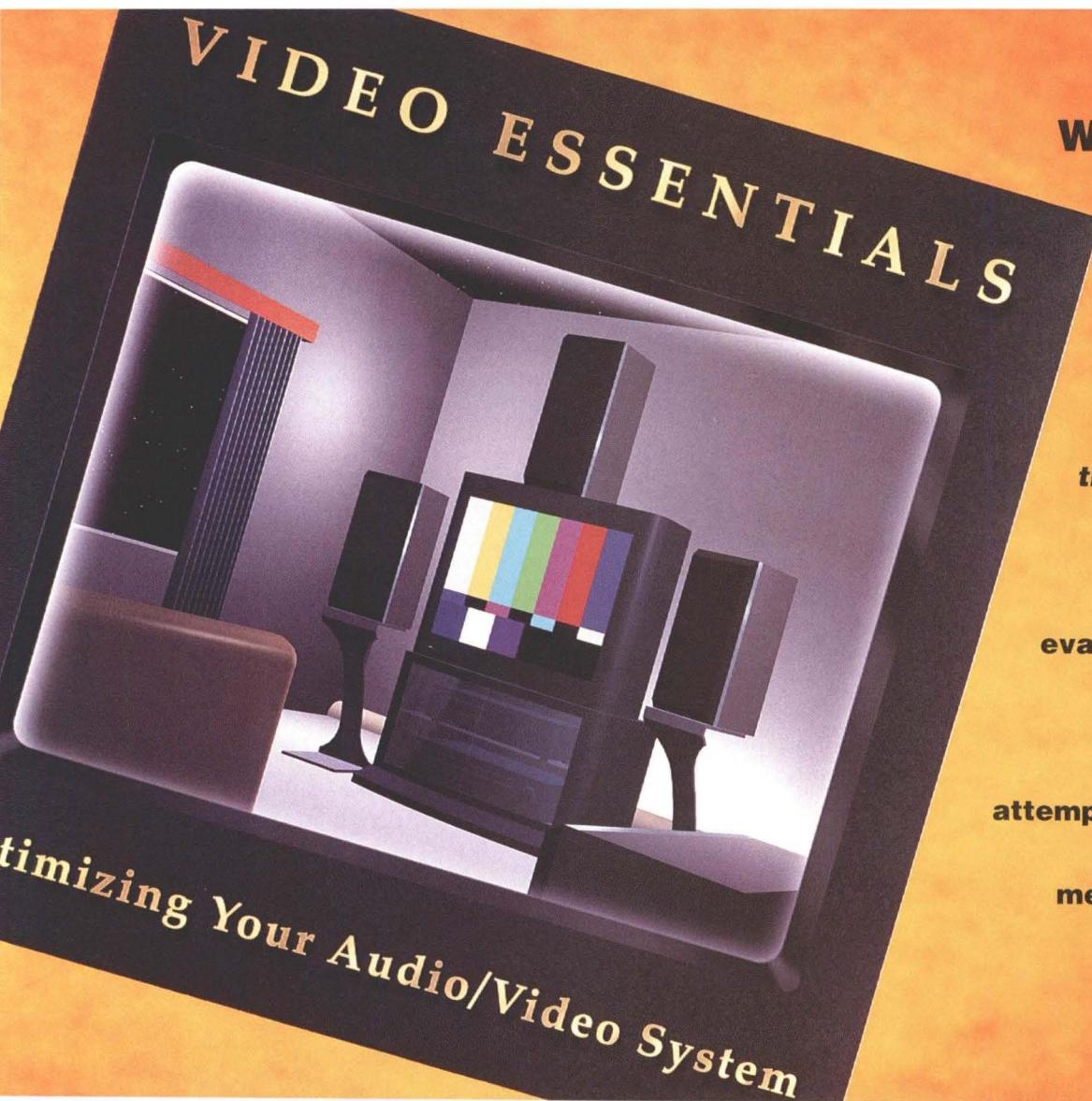
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\*Tom Miller, The Audio Adventure, September 1995.

# Back to Basics



With the release

of *Video Essentials*,

Joe Kane, creator

of *A Video Standard*,

the indispensable test

laserdisc for

evaluating the quality

of your video system,

attempts to spread his

message to the masses.

by Al Griffin

When the laserdisc *A Video Standard* appeared in 1989, the concept of high-end video was created along with it. The concept of a test disc at that point was nothing new: Audiophiles had been using such discs for years to guide them through the proper setup of their audio systems. Videophiles, however, lacked a comprehensive reference to check that their video equipment was behaving properly, reproducing video signals with a high degree of fidelity.



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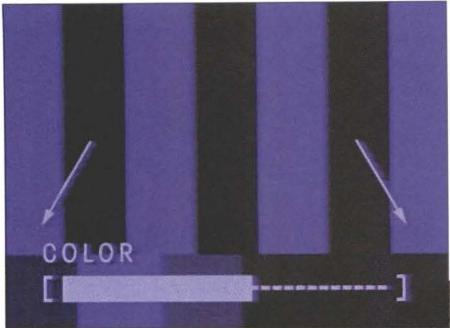
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## Back to Basics

After word about *A Video Standard* began to circulate among a select group of consumers who cared as much about video quality as they did about audio quality, an inescapable truth emerged: Consumer video

products, television sets in particular, had numerous deficiencies that prevented them from presenting video source material in the manner it was originally intended to be seen. But it wasn't just the consumers who took note of the problems AVS



**Onscreen graphics guide you through the process of adjusting your TV's picture controls (above).**

**In case you were wondering, that vertical growth on top of the TV is a THX-approved center speaker (right). Two different PLUGE patterns with varying average picture levels are used to check your TV's ability to maintain a consistent black level (below).**



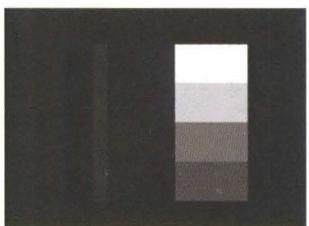
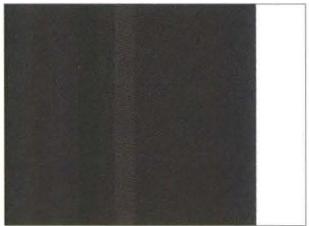
revealed—manufacturers took note, as well. In fact, the vast improvements we've seen in video gear over the past seven years are attributable to the *AVS* disc, which single-handedly stimulated consumer demand

for accurate video reproduction in the home environment.

Having achieved this goal, one would think that *AVS*'s creator would be satisfied.

That, however, is not the case. According to Kane, *AVS* merely scratched the surface—the greater mass of consumers remains to be enlightened

about our NTSC video system and the benefits of proper TV adjustment. Moreover, they need to have the process explained to them in a way that's relatively



simple to digest. Which is precisely why *Video Essentials* was created: It's a step-by-step guide that doesn't bludgeon the user with an abundance of technical information, but provides just enough of it to allow the average person to set up their video system correctly.

In keeping with its back-to-basics philosophy, *Video Essentials* refrains from going beyond the original *AVS* disc, or the manual that accompanied it, in providing a wealth of technical video information. In fact, *Video Essentials* doesn't come with a manual at all—the information it intends to communicate is contained on the disc itself. The content of *Video Essentials* will undoubtedly disappoint the hardcore videophiles who were perhaps awaiting the arrival of *A Video Standard II*, wherein telecine methods would be tackled in-depth, and juicy supplemental materials presented on the various phosphor types used in video display devices. That type of person (you know who you are) should nonetheless find comfort in the fact that several test signals that weren't included on the original disc are present on its successor.

### Room Environment

*Video Essentials* uses an off-screen narrator to guide viewers through the setup of a virtual home theater created with 3-D computer animation techniques. The first topic that's discussed is the ideal home theater environment. The narrator explains the need for neutral color schemes in the area of the room surrounding the television; the environment as depicted in the onscreen home theater is a medium gray, although the narrator stops short of actually telling viewers to paint their walls the same color. The point, he suggests, is to ensure that the environment surrounding the television does not conflict with the onscreen image.

Other topics discussed early in the disc include the need to carefully control ambient light levels in a viewing environment, and, at the same time, the need to add some degree of light to the room, preferably in the area behind the set. These two topics are closely intertwined: *Video Essentials* suggests that, although it's important to minimize the amount of light in a home theater environment, viewing a set in a completely darkened room will create eye strain, so a small amount of room lighting is actually beneficial. The solution that *Video Essentials*' narrator suggests is to equip windows in the room with heavy drapes that will shut out ambient light, and to strategically place

# THE BRYSTON THX SERIES AMPLIFIERS

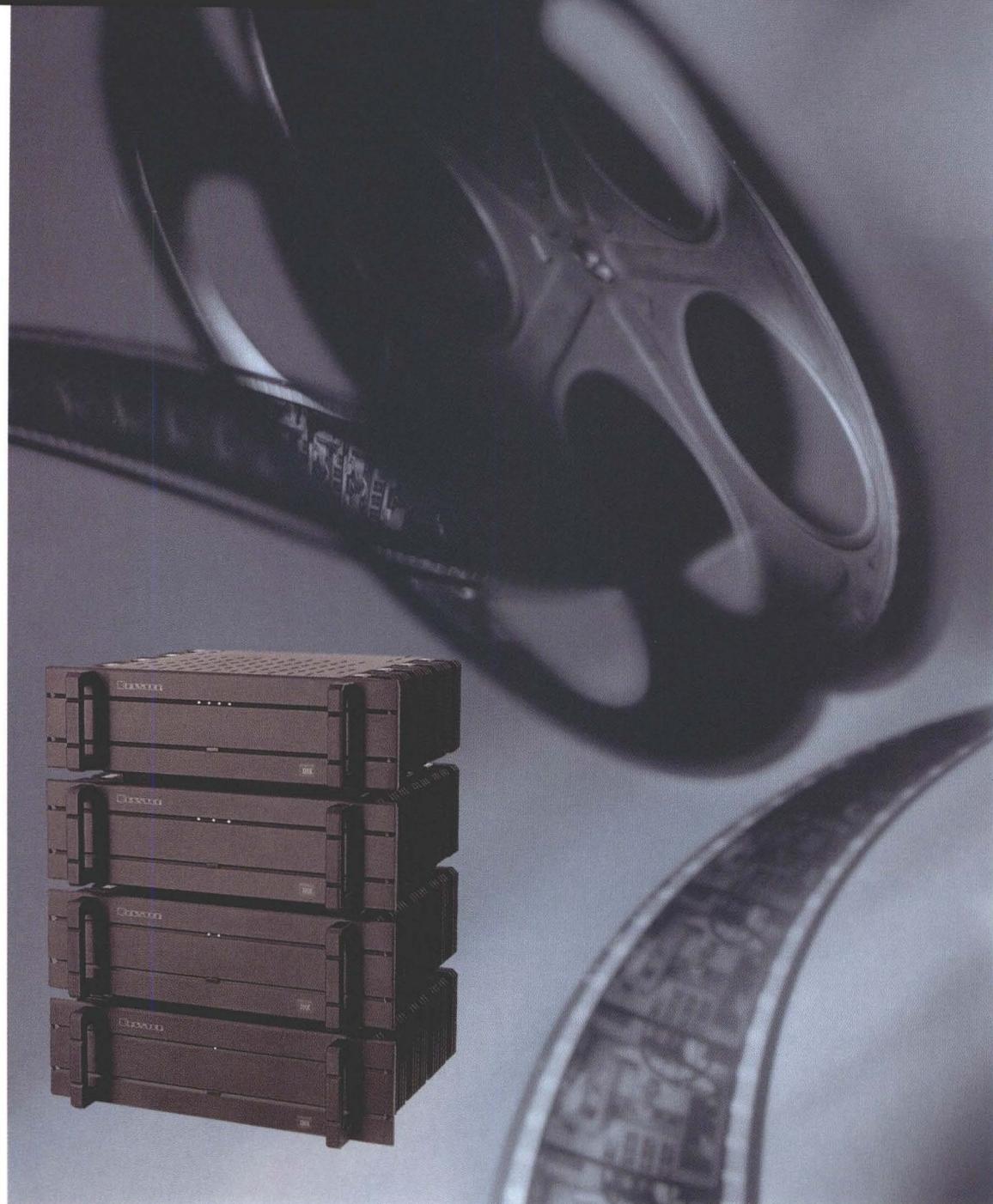
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# Back to Basics

light sources to alleviate the eye strain that occurs in darkened room environments. The type of light that's suggested is one that has a color temperature at or near 6500 degrees Kelvin, the NTSC standard for the color of gray. Use of incandescent bulbs is generally a bad option—the kind of light they produce tends to be warm and colored, as opposed to "neutral." Several types of fluorescent bulbs are available that can provide a more neutral source of ambient light.

## Audio Essentials

Rather than diving directly into video setup procedures, *Video Essentials* next covers the proper setup of the audio portion of a home theater. This, according

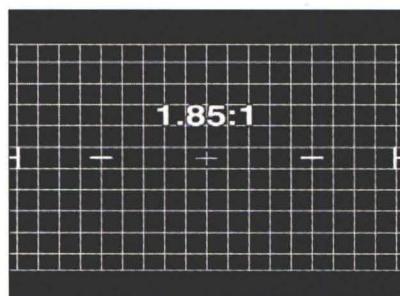
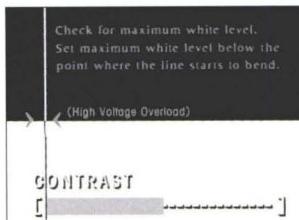
**The effect adjustments should have on the picture are depicted onscreen (above). Demonstration material features scenes with a broad palette of colors (right).**

**Chapter 15 features several test signals that installers will find useful, such as this 1.85:1 aspect ratio crosshatch pattern (below).**



to the narrator, will allow your television to warm up for the 30-minute period it requires to perform at its maximum potential. Audio test signals allow for testing the proper phasing of the connections in your audio system; once you verify proper phasing, you can move on to the pink-noise signals used to balance each channel in a surround sound system.

Prior to the audio test signal chapter, the use of a sound pressure level meter for calibrating the output of each individual channel in a Pro Logic or Dolby Digital system is discussed. The meter the narrator suggests you go out and purchase is the RadioShack SPL meter with an analog display—the same model that we use at *Home Theater* magazine. You can pick



one of these up at virtually any Rad Shack in the U.S. of A., provided the guy behind the counter knows what you're talking about. If he doesn't, grab a catalog and point it out to him. They'll have it in stock.

*Video Essentials* includes standard Dolby Surround- and Dolby Digital-encoded tracks, so you can use the test signals to set up systems based around both types of processors. Each test signal lasts for a considerable amount of time, and is separated by chapters, which allows you to program an A-B loop on your laserdisc player that will make the signal play continuously.

This provides you with the opportunity to take an average reading of each speaker's output by measuring it from several different points on the plane at which you're sitting—a method that generally provides more accurate measurements. The speaker setup depicted

onscreen while the disc generates test signals follows THX specs: vertically oriented center speaker, and dipolar rears set up high on the side walls with the null pointed at the listener's head. Although I don't think it was intended for humorous effect, the towering vertical center speaker, which is about as large as the television on top of which it sits, looks quite silly. Don't feel that you need to adopt this practice—horizontally oriented center speakers in a home theater installation work just fine. THX-certified center speakers that dare to get horizontal are also available; in our opinion, this option is preferable to having a sound-

emitting monolith perched precariously atop your monitor.

## Video Essentials

Side two of the disc features several basic test signals that are used in adjusting a TV with the set's picture controls. Individual chapters are featured for each control:

brightness, contrast, color, tint, and sharpness.

A *Video Standard* includes test signals identical to the ones found in the first few chapters on side two of *Video Essentials*, so longtime owners of AVS will find nothing new to dig into here. Those who are just getting into home theater, however, will appreciate the interactive structure of the chapters, in which a narrator discusses in detail each test signal and its specific function in proper TV setup. Onscreen graphics



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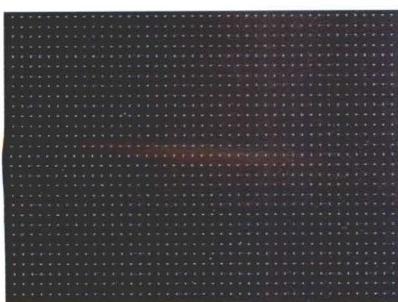
**DCM**  
HOME THEATER

## Back to Basics

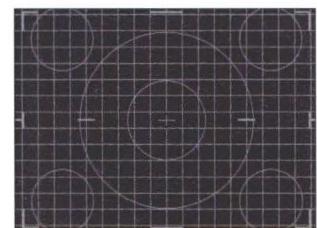
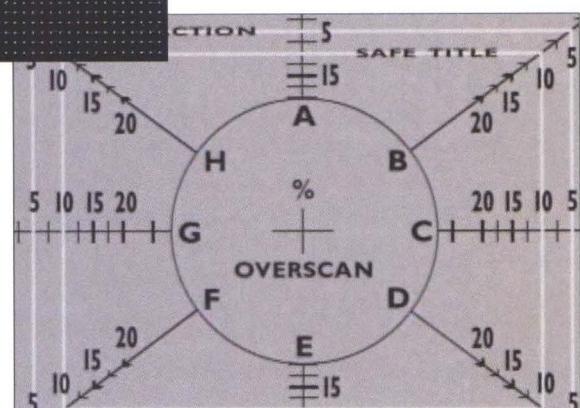
indicate the areas in the signal you should be looking at when making your adjustments; "dramatizations" of the effect that adjustments should have on the image are depicted, as well.

Although the thrust of each of the video calibration chapters is to briefly discuss your TV's picture controls and the effect they have on the displayed image, you'll also find a good deal of information about the inner workings of a television, as well as visual

demonstrations that indicate just how well your TV is performing (or not performing). For example, in the chapter on the brightness control, both video black level and average picture level, or APL, are discussed. Two separate PLUGE



You can use the dot-hatch pattern in Chapter 15 to check corner and edge focus on projectors (above). A chart reveals the percentage of overscan present on your monitor (right). The crosshatch pattern features circles for quickly setting picture geometry (below).



patterns (the PLUGE pattern being the test signal on which brightness controls are adjusted) each display varying amounts of white. The PLUGE pattern with the greater white area is said to have a higher APL, while the pattern with less white has a lower APL. The narrator tells us that a properly performing TV should be able to maintain the same black level at differing average picture levels, and the disc then switches rapidly between the two PLUGE patterns. If your TV has good DC restoration capability, you should see no difference in black level; if it doesn't, the level of black in each frame will shift dramatically when the switching occurs.

The other video calibration chapters go into great detail about setting your TV's contrast, color, tint, and sharpness controls. The chapter on contrast features visual demonstrations of the "blooming" effect that

occurs when you set a TV's contrast beyond its linear operating range; the color and tint chapters demonstrate how the errors in a TV's NTSC decoder will show up on a SMPTE color bar test pattern. The color and tint overview chapter is one of the most useful sections on the disc in that it shows you what decoder errors look like when viewed through red-, green-, and blue-only filters; unfortunately you'll not be able to test for these problems yourself on any color outside of blue, because the disc only includes a blue filter to peer through.

*Video Essentials'* video calibration section concludes with a discussion of the color gray in video, and how you can't adjust a TV to properly reproduce a gray scale via the set's front-panel controls; it requires the services of trained professionals, such as those certified by Kane's own organization, the Imaging Science Foundation. This abrupt, and somewhat ominous ending is likely to leave consumers baffled, fearing that their TV is still not functioning properly, despite the fact that they bought *Video Essentials* and carefully followed the steps contained therein. But, as the ISF ads state, "Joe Kane says that your TV is all wrong...and he's right." *Video Essentials* is just the first step in getting your TV to properly reproduce an NTSC video image. Those wishing to go the next step along the path to accurate video display will have to follow this last bit of advice.

As a basic introduction to the proper setup of a home theater system, *Video Essentials* succeeds in getting its message of good video across. Consumers who are interested in getting the maximum performance out of their TVs would do well to pick up a copy; more advanced video enthusiasts will also find something of value in the video test material chapter, which includes many test signals not included on the original AVS disc, including crosshatch patterns configured in several different aspect ratios, and dot-hatch patterns for checking the focus of a video projector. *Video Essentials* is receiving wide distribution by Image Entertainment, so it should be available now in laserdisc stores everywhere. Check it out, and discover how a properly set up television is capable of performing.

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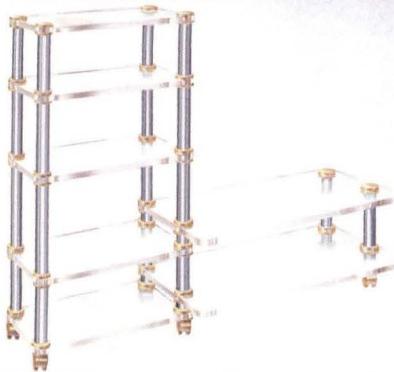
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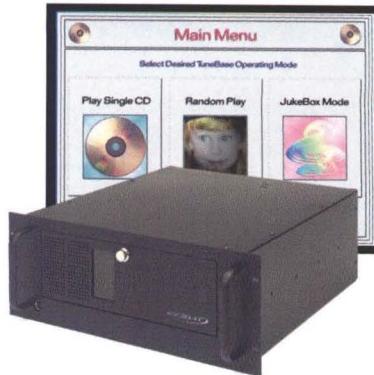
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FACE OFF





# The Liquid Crystal Acid Test

**Dig the heavy**

AMPRO  
LCD-100

**vibes our editors**

RUNCO  
LCP-500

**lay down about**

SANYO  
PLC-700M

**the grooviness**

SHARP  
XV-S95U

**of these five LCD**

SHARP  
XV-H37U

**projectors, man.**

Exactly how open *is* your mind? If I were to hit you with a concept, could you dig it? Dig this: LCD projectors aren't just for the uptight suits in corporate boardrooms anymore! You know, those guys with the pie charts and graphs who, in the service of the MAN, scheme to feed the war machine, and feather their own nests on the backs of the workers.

No, LCD projectors have moved way, way beyond that. In fact, they've moved into the home, so now all of us can trip out to *Barbarella* or *Easy Rider* or any of our favorite movies in the womb-like privacy of our own home theater any time we please. Pretty far out, huh? Back before revolutionary consciousness gained hold among the people, there was a time when the only viable choice for a home front-projection system was a CRT projector, which uses individual

## **Seeing a video image blown up almost to the size you'd encounter in a movie theater can be highly entertaining.**

CRTs for the red, green, and blue components of a video signal. Now, CRT projectors can provide amazingly good images, but there are also a few downers to going the CRT route. The first would be the weight of a CRT projector: The three CRTs, combined with the corresponding lens assemblies, power supply, and various other things, result in one heavy unit, man, and one that's not exactly portable, either. The second downer is the complexity of CRT projector setup. Unless you're some kind of geek genius, or have taken courses in video projector installation, you'll have to rely on the services of a professional installer to get a CRT projector looking right: It's a time-consuming procedure that demands a good deal of prior experience. The third downer is the price: CRT projectors cost lots of bread—usually upward of \$10,000 to \$20,000—

and if you're planning to add a line doubler or quadrupler, the price of the system can get really far out.

LCD projectors address each of the shortcomings of CRT models: They're light, portable, easy to set up, and generally inexpensive. The majority of projectors we'll be looking at in our LCD Acid Test cost around \$10,000, but we've also seen impressive LCD models that cost as little as \$2,500—a price we consider to be accessible.

LCD projectors generally use three separate panels to convey red, green, and blue picture information. These panels consist of tiny elements called pixels, which are arrayed over the

face of the panel. A powerful lamp inside the projector beams light onto the panels; the red, green, and blue light components are then recombined and projected through a lens element onto a screen. It's a process that can produce a fine image, and, unlike CRT models, which have settings that tend to drift over time, you won't have to worry about adjusting the projector on a regular basis.

There are a few major problems we've encountered in the past when using LCD projectors. The first is that they've been unable to hold a decent level of black—the imperfect opacity of the LCD panels instead creates a uniform gray that we found unacceptable when watching movies. The second problem has been the pixelization effect that occurs when images are blown up to the 80- to 100-inch screen size that's desirable for home theater. This artifact can be compared to the grainy effect you encounter when looking

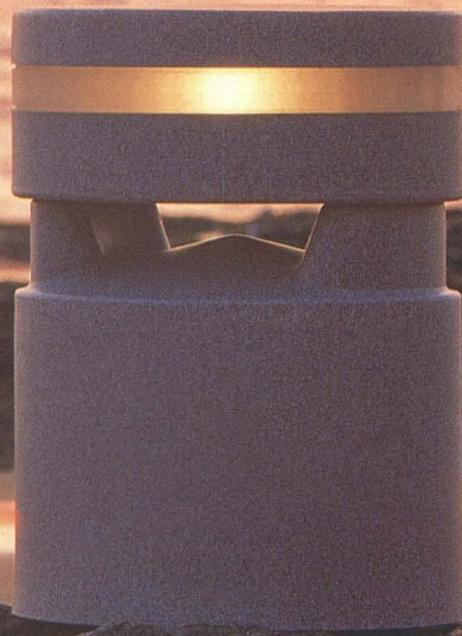
at a QuickTime movie on a computer screen, although the effect is hardly that pronounced. The third and fourth, and perhaps most irritating, problems we've seen in LCD projectors are hotspots and color shifts, particularly when a scene with a lot of white area appears onscreen. These are the problems we were conscious of when entering this Face Off. Just how well each projector fared when held up to our collective scrutiny shall be revealed in the reviews that follow.

Now that I've enlightened you to the status of LCD projectors in our Great Society, I expect you to make an informed decision about adding one to your home theater. Seeing a video image blown up almost to the size you'd encounter in a movie theater can be highly entertaining—I can't begin to describe the fun we had experimenting with the Sanyo PLC-700M data-grade projector, which can project a bright, watchable image measuring up to 25 feet diagonal. We practically filled the entire wall of our photographer's studio with video! It was an experience that will be emblazoned on my retinas for all eternity. ☺

### **TESTING SYSTEM**

- **Runco LJR-II laserdisc player**
- **Stewart StudioTek 130 screen (7-foot, 1.3 gain)**
- **Da-Lite High-Power Screen (6-foot, 2.9 gain)**
- **Runco SC3050 line doubler**
- **Canare composite and RGB video cable**

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# AmPro LCD-100

AmPro projects a positive image.

When we asked AmPro to send us an LCD projector for our Face Off, we half-expected them to send us an industrial-grade wildebeest, with an overly loud fan and a design more appropriate for a university A/V department than a

screen and still retain focus. The remote has image zoom and focus controls, as well as horizontal and vertical centering functions for aligning the image perfectly in the screen's center.

The LCD-100 features RGB inputs for displaying images from a computer; video inputs consist of two composite and one S-video.

virtually no color fringing visible on the crosshatch pattern, only small amounts of chroma PM noise, and an impressive comb filter that left minimal dot crawl and no hanging dots. One particular problem we were looking closely for did make itself visible, however, on a white full-field pattern: hot-spotting. The LCD-100 presented a somewhat less than uniform image across the screen, with areas of light beaming toward the center of the picture.



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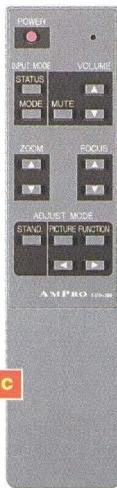
**A. The LCD-100's fan won't drown out the sound in your home theater.**

**B. RGB inputs allow the projector to be used as a monitor for your computer system.**

**C. A small hole in the upper right corner of the remote provides access to the LCD-100's service menu.**

What we eventually received from AmPro turned our expectations on their head. (Thankfully, the LCD-100 has an image-invert feature to compensate for this anomaly.) From an industrial design standpoint, the AmPro projector was the slickest-looking of the bunch, and came equipped with an equally well-designed and easy-to-use remote. Oh yes, and it produced an impressive picture. But more on that later.

The LCD-100 uses three LCD panels combined with a 250-watt metal halide lamp to produce a bright and surprisingly detailed (for LCD) image. For setup, the minimum throw distance is 8.2 feet, with 27.6 feet being the maximum distance you can position the projector from the



Available picture adjustment controls include the standard brightness, contrast, color, tint, and sharpness, as well as luminance

noise reduction for use with noisy input sources. You can access a service menu by inserting a paper clip into a small hole on the upper part of the remote; this enables users to adjust among other things the red, green, and blue sub-brightness and sub-contrast controls to achieve proper gray-scale reproduction. By the time we finished fiddling with these particular controls, the gray scale looked pretty close to the 6,500-degree NTSC standard.

In viewing test frames from the *A Video Standard* test disc, we observed that the projector had excellent convergence, with

#### AmPro LCD-100

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The uniformity problem lessened to an extent when we switched over to regular movie laserdiscs. All told, once we finished our adjustments and sat back to watch our visual reference disc, *Benny & Joon*, we were quite happy with what we saw. We noticed a small degree of pixelization in the image, but its effects proved over time to be negligible. In deeming the AmPro's picture "very watchable," Brian perhaps best summed up the thoughts of us all. A very watchable picture, indeed. ☺

# It Takes a Great Projector to Make a Line Doubler Look Good...

Of course, we're partial to Dwin's own System LD-2 Line Doubler/Controller, but the HD-500 looks great with any input signal. Using the latest circuit design techniques and commercial-grade components, the HD-500's broad scanning range is compatible with DVD, doublers, quadruplers, computers and all proposed HDTV standards. Over 60 aspect ratio/scan rate memory positions let you screen movies in their original format while our exclusive highly efficient, scan-synchronized high-voltage power supply stays rock steady even with the most dramatic black-to-white scene transitions.

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The System 3 package includes our renowned LD-2 Line Doubler/Controller, the HD-500 projector, a low-profile ceiling mount and infrared or RS232 remote control for under \$15,000. Select from seven A/V inputs using easy-to-operate onscreen menus while viewing filmlike images. Dwin's exclusive circuits deliver accurate chroma decoding with extensive gray-scale controls while virtually eliminating scan lines.

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# Runco LCP-500

Runco's new LCD projector rocks our world.

As the first LCD projector to come to us from Runco International, manufacturer of the impressive IDP-980 Ultra front projector featured in our May '96 issue, the LCP-500 had a considerable pedigree to live up to. We knew Runco wouldn't release a product that didn't meet their usual high standards for

Inputs present on the LCP-500 include one composite video, one S-video, and an RGB input for connecting a computer source; both Mac and PC formats are supported. By attaching the IR receiver that comes with the unit to your computer's mouse port, the remote's pad can be used as a mouse when operating the LCP-500 as a computer monitor, which is about the coolest feature

that the unit's gray scale, which Runco presets at 7,500 degrees Kelvin at the factory, was tracking extremely well. The only serious anomaly we uncovered with the LCP-500 was poor picture convergence, which resulted in color fringing on a crosshatch pattern. We hope Runco will correct this problem by the time they step up production on the unit.

Our impressions of the LCP-500 were uniformly positive. Citing the projector's amazing detail and color accuracy, Brent claimed it was the best LCD projector he'd



- A. The LCP-500's compact industrial design was characterized as "cute" by one panelist.**
- B. RGB inputs allow you to use the LCP-500 with both a Mac and a PC.**
- C. When using the unit's IR receiver, the remote's touch-sensitive pad can be used as a mouse.**

image quality, but given the past limitations of LCD technology, we weren't sure how they'd pull it off. So, with rubber gloves on and magnifying goggles in place, we unboxed the LCP-500.

The LCP-500 uses a 250-watt lamp that Runco guarantees for 6 months or 2,000 hours of use. Throw distance for the projector is from 3.28 to 39.37 feet; image size ranges from a mere 20 inches to an incredible 25 feet diagonal. The remote control features zoom and focus adjustments, and also has preset buttons for 2x and 4x zoom; a touch-sensitive pad allows you to scan select areas of the image.



we've seen on any product, ever.

Viewing a full-field white frame from *A Video Standard* to test white field uniformity, we observed a degree of color shift on the LCP-500, although it wasn't nearly as bad as what we encountered with the Sharp XV-H37U. Hot-spotting proved to be minimal: Of all the projectors tested, it performed best on this parameter. Viewing the SMPTE color bar frame revealed that the LCP-500's comb filter, which is the same type Runco uses in their IJR-II laserdisc player, was excellent, with only minimal visible dot crawl and hanging dots. A gray-scale frame also revealed



<b>Runco LCP-500</b>	<b>\$9,995</b>
Runco International 2463 Tripaldi Way Hayward, CA 94545 (510) 293-9154 Circle Reader Service No. 523 Dealer Locator Code RUN	

ever seen. Like the rest of us, he was surprised to see an LCD projector produce an image with solid, detailed blacks and minimal pixelization artifacts. Brian appreciated the LCP-500's compact design (he thought it was *cute*) and its relatively quiet fan.

Given the impressive performance of the LCP-500, we can't wait to see Runco's LCP-400—an LCD projector Runco claims matches the LCP-500 in image quality, yet costs \$2,500 less! ☺

# Which 79¢/foot speaker cable blew away the high-priced competition in a "Home Theater" review?

The advertisement features a top section with the text "Klara" in blue and "Prism 22" in purple and yellow. Below this, there are two images: one showing a white speaker cable with a braided shield, and another showing a blue interconnect cable with gold-plated connectors. The main text area is divided into three sections: a left column, a right column, and a bottom section.

**Klara**

**Prism 22**

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**Another example...Our \$39 Prism 22 was declared "the best interconnect under \$100/m pair" by "Fi" magazine.**

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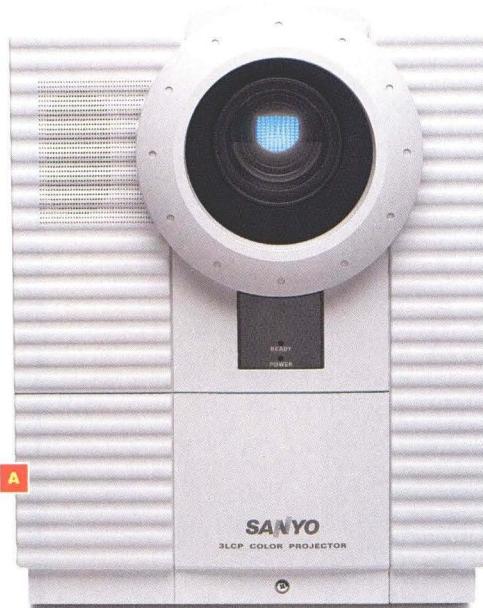
Brent Butterworth  
in "Home Theater"/June 1996

**TARA LABS**  
541/488-6465

# Sanyo PLC-700M

Can industrial-strength LCD work for home theater?

If there were a single word we could offer to describe the Sanyo PLC-700M LCD projector, it would be utilitarian. This is not a machine for lightweights; think of it as the



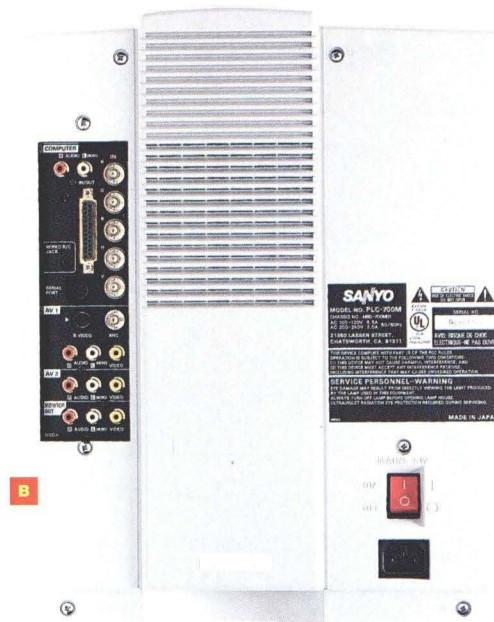
- A. The PLC-700M produces an image that's both big and bright.**
- B. You'll find an extensive array of inputs for a multitude of sources.**
- C. The remote is backlit to eliminate late-night fumbling.**

LCD equivalent of a Sherman tank. We were amazed at its ability to take the input of almost any international video standard or computer source and output a watchable 25-foot-diagonal image at a distance of approximately 36 feet.

With its 400-watt metal halide lamp, the PLC-700M produced the brightest picture of all the projectors in our Face Off. It features three LCD panels, and has a motorized lens that

enables you to zoom, focus, and shift the image position via remote, which is a backlit model.

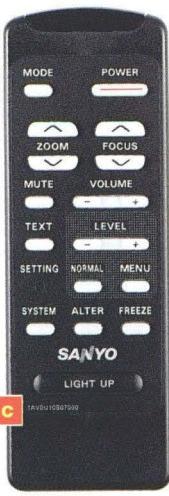
You can position the PLC-700M at distances ranging from 3.2 to 35.8 feet from the screen to accommodate screen sizes of 20 inches to 300 inches diagonal. It features two composite, one S-video, and



one BNC video input, two computer inputs: a DB25-pin terminal,

and five BNC jacks for R, G, B, horizontal sync, and vertical sync. The RGB input can also be used to connect a line doubler—an option we strongly recommend to get the best performance out of this particular projector. In addition to standard NTSC video, the PLC-700M supports three additional video standards, including PAL, SECAM, and NTSC 4.43.

The PLC-700M isn't exactly what we'd call a refined



video device; its strengths lie, rather, in its overall functionality. The projector's internal fan was considerably louder than any of the other units tested, and its NTSC decoder was all but unusable, necessitating the inclusion of a \$9,995 Runco SC-3050 line doubler in the video chain (which enabled us to bypass the Sanyo's decoder) to achieve accurate color and tint settings in an image. White field uniformity on the PLC-700M was poor: When displaying a white full-field frame from *A Video Standard*, the image appeared to be considerably darker on top than at the bottom of the screen. The projector's convergence also left something to be desired, with visible color fringing observable on a crosshatch pattern from AVS.

Coming from the world of industrial-grade LCD products, the PLC-700M, we'd anticipated, might not be the best option for home theater. Unless you have access to an external device, such as a line doubler, to use as an NTSC decoder, we can't recommend using the PLC-700M for home theater applications at all.

Sanyo PLC-700M	\$9,995
Sanyo	
21350 Lassen Street	
Chatsworth, CA 91311	
(800) 421-5013	
Circle Reader Service No. 524	
Dealer Locator Code SAN	

Still, Brent insisted the PLC-700M was the projector he'd want to own, provided he had large, open loft space in which to install it. He found the big image the projector produced to be tremendously appealing. If big images are important to you, you too might appreciate the PLC-700M. ☺

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# Sharp XV-S95U

Sharp's flagship model leaves us wondering which end is up.

Most *Home Theater* readers will recognize Sharp as a manufacturer of affordable LCD projectors. Back in the October '95 issue, editor Brent Butterworth enthused over their XV-P15U, a \$2,495 projector that broke new ground in terms of price/performance ratio in the

adaptable to a wide spectrum of installation requirements. Once the desired placement is set, the projector's back-lit remote allows the user to zoom, focus, and shift the image position vertically. Two composite video inputs and one S-video input are present on the unit; however, an RGB input for hookup of a computer is conspicuously absent. Each of the other

Brent hasn't encountered in seven years of reviewing video equipment. White field uniformity, although better than what we perceived on both the AmPro and the Sharp XV-H37U, suffered from a degree of center hot-spotting, and a gray full-field pattern revealed a high amount of luminance noise in the image. The performance of the unit's comb filter was standard at best: We saw both dot crawl and hanging dots on the SMPTE color bar frame from AVS.

But the most objectionable



- A. A 350-watt bulb ensures an extremely bright picture from the SV-S95U.**
- B. You'll find composite video and S-video inputs, but no RGB.**
- C. The SV-S95U's remote is easy to use and lights up in dark rooms.**

LCD category. But it appears that Sharp has its hands in the high end as well: The XV-S95U, which retails for a cool \$9,995, represents the extreme top end of the company's line in terms price and, one would expect, performance.

In order to achieve the company's goal of producing the brightest possible image to be found in LCD projection, the XV-S95U uses a 350-watt metal halide lamp, which beats out most of the other models in our Face Off by 100 watts. The unit has three LCD panels, each containing a total of 309,120 pixels.

The setup range of the XV-S95U is 4.3 to 23 feet, which makes it



projectors in the Face Off falling into the \$10,000 price range include this feature.

Menu features of the XV-S95U include adjustable image masking, and two picture-control menu formats: a full-screen display, and an abridged display that drops the slider bar down to the bottom of the screen. Once the basic picture adjustments are set, you can make fine adjustment of the white level using the XV-S95U's background controls, which affect the red and blue bias of the projector's gray scale.

The image produced by the XV-S95U was, in a word, disappointing. We were unable to properly set the black level on a PLUGE pattern—a problem that



<b>Sharp XV-S95U</b>	<b>\$9,995</b>
Sharp Electronics Corporation	
Sharp Plaza	
Mahwah, NJ 07430-2135	
(201) 529-8200	
Circle Reader Service No. 525	
Dealer Locator Code SHA	

visual artifacts of all in images produced by the XV-S95U might be attributable to the projector's line-doubling circuitry. On movies, color resolution was poor: Close-up shots of faces looked pixelated and highly unnatural, almost like the compressed video from a CD-ROM source. For a unit costing \$9,995, which lacks an RGB input, Sharp needs to try a little harder—ultimately, solid performance parameters must exist in order to distinguish the high- from the low-end products in a manufacturer's line. ☺

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# Sharp XV-H37U

A low-priced projector that gets the details right.

At \$4,695, the Sharp XV-H37U was the least expensive projector in our Face Off by a considerable margin. Given the extreme price differential between it and the other units tested, we were very impressed at how well it held up against the competition, including

Setup features for the XV-H37U are essentially the same as those found on the XV-S95U, with the exception of a motorized lens shift function that's only available on the high-end Sharp model. As with the XV-S95U, the user can select a picture adjustment menu that defaults to a single slider bar on

minimal during playback of regular video material, we'd be inclined to overlook their significance; unfortunately, that wasn't the case with the XV-H37U.

Areas where the XV-H37U impressed us included an overall lack of pixelization, good image resolution, and a comb filter that appeared to slightly exceed the performance of the more expensive Sharp projector. We were able to easily set black level, and, although we detected chroma PM and AM noise on a magenta frame, the



- A. The XV-H37U projects a surprisingly detailed image for a \$4,695 LCD unit.**
- B. Don't think about hooking up a computer: This projector only has composite and S-video inputs.**
- C. The back-lit remote is the same type included with Sharp's nearly twice as expensive XV-S95U.**

Sharp's own top-of-the-line XV-S95U. But that's why we included it in the first place: It was necessary to check if the additional cost of the higher-end units was justified.

The XV-H37U has many of the features found on the XV-S95U, including three individual LCD panels, two composite video inputs, and one S-video input, a user-friendly, back-lit remote, and adjustable masking. Where it differs from the XV-S95U is in the optics: the focal length of the lens requires that the XV-H37U be mounted from the screen within a 4.6- to 29.2-foot range, and the projector uses a 250-watt, as opposed to 350-watt, metal halide lamp.



the bottom of the screen, and the user can make red and blue "background" adjustments to the projector's white balance to dial in an accurate gray scale.

Viewing test frames from the *A Video Standard* disc revealed that the XV-H37U suffered from some common LCD projector problems; surprisingly, they turned out to be very different, and in some ways, less pronounced, than those found on the XV-S95U. Image uniformity was poor. One side

of the image projected by the XV-H37U took on a brownish cast, and the other side appeared biased toward blue. Hot-spotting near the top of the image was also very noticeable. If these problems were



<b>Sharp XV-H37U</b>	<b>\$4,695</b>
Sharp Electronics Corporation	
Sharp Plaza	
Mahwah, NJ 07430-2135	
(201) 529-8200	
Circle Reader Service No. 526	
Dealer Locator Code SHA	

luminance noise problems which plagued the XV-S95U were not at all evident on the XV-H37U.

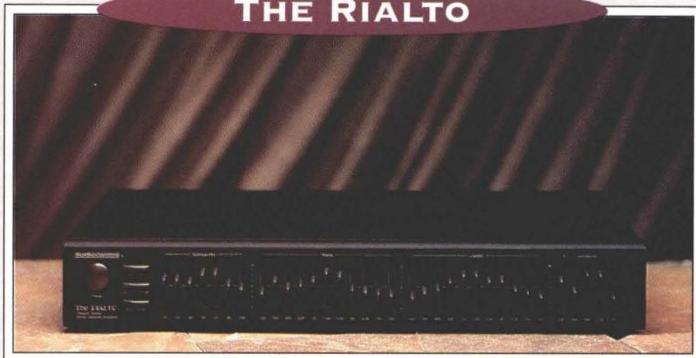
In Brian's opinion, the color shifts and hot-spotting near the top of the image were extremely distracting. Brent and I essentially agreed, but also noted a wide gradation of color detail in the XV-H37U's image. Oddly enough, the XV-H37U's good color detail was the opposite of what we observed in the \$9,995 XV-S95U. Which just goes to prove, a higher price tag doesn't necessarily guarantee better performance. ☺

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# Wrap Up

Now we've seen it all: an LCD projector that actually delivered detail in the black portions of a projected image. The Runco might have stolen the show with that particular coup, but the other projectors tested also had good points to remark upon. We love the portability of small, lightweight LCD projectors—enough, probably, to forgive them their shortcomings.



### **AmPro LCD-100 \$6,995**

- Cool industrial design
- Slim, easy-to-use remote control
- Horizontal and vertical image-centering functions on remote
- RGB input for computer hookup
- Luminance noise reduction circuit
- Service menu for adjusting R, G, B sub-brightness and sub-contrast to achieve proper gray-scale reproduction
- Artifacts include some hot-spotting and slight pixelation
- Impressive comb filter minimizes dot crawl and hanging dots



### **Sanyo PLC-700M \$9,995**

- 400-watt metal halide lamp provides higher than average light output
- Projector's throw distance ranges from approximately 3 to 36 feet
- Accommodates screen sizes of 20 to 300 inches diagonal
- Extensive array of video inputs and two different computer inputs
- Accepts multiple video standards, including PAL, SECAM, and NTSC 4.43
- Can accept the RGB+Sync output from a line doubler so you can bypass its mediocre NTSC decoder
- Image uniformity problems on both test signals and movies

If you're seriously planning on purchasing an LCD projector in the near future, we recommend you use a low-gain screen, and get a copy of *A Video Standard* or *Video Essentials* to check for image uniformity and hot-spotting. If you see dramatic color shifts and/or overly beamy patches of light onscreen, you're probably not going to be happy with the unit. 'Nuff said. Here's the dope on the projectors:



### **Runco LCP-500 \$9,995**

- 250-watt metal halide lamp is guaranteed for six months, or 2,000 hours of use
- Projector's throw distance ranges from approximately 3 to 40 feet
- Image size adjustable from 20 inches to 25 feet diagonal
- RGB input included for computer hookup
- Multiple video standards supported, including PAL, SECAM, and M-NTSC
- IR receiver allows use of remote's touchpad as a computer mouse
- Minimal hot-spotting on images; slight color shifts observable
- Poor picture convergence
- Great image detail, color accuracy, and gray-scale tracking
- Black reproduction excellent for an LCD projector



### **Sharp XV-H37U \$4,695**

- Color shift and hot-spotting problems on both test signals and movies
- Background level controls allow for adjustment of red and blue levels in the projector's gray scale
- Competitive price for an LCD projector
- No RGB input for computer hookup
- Good color resolution and detail in images
- Performance exceeds that of the XV-S95U



### **Sharp XV-S95U \$9,995**

- 350-watt metal halide lamp ensures maximal light output
- Vertical image shift can be controlled via remote during setup
- Simple, backlit remote
- No RGB input
- Background level controls allow for adjustment of red and blue levels in the projector's gray scale
- Brightness control does not have enough range to properly set black level
- Poor color resolution and high amounts of luminance noise.

# Delicious?



## Some Food for Thought:

Corey Greenberg, who is not known for discretion in his criticisms of equipment, said:

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*"For the first time we heard real depth and imaging from THX speakers when we played familiar stereo music through them."*

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From the System Components review in the September 1995 issue of Home Theater Technology.

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# What Do You Think?

“

**If you're still watching** a direct-view TV, don't pretend you've got a home theater. If you could have seen the 20-plus-foot picture we got out of the Sanyo LCD projector, you'd realize what a powerful experience a big picture really is, and why a small TV just doesn't deliver. Give me the Sanyo, a huge white wall (in a room with at least a 15-foot ceiling), and a powerhouse sound system like B&W's THX speakers and an ADA amp, and I'd be happy in my home theater for a long, long time. The fact is, home theater gets better the more it approaches the experience of a *theater* theater, and the Sanyo is the closest I've come to reaching that goal. I know it's an industrial product, and won't fit into many home environments, but I'd make whatever sacrifices necessary to accommodate it if I could scrape up the 10 grand for the projector. Hey, Sanyo: How about a model with a quieter fan?

As someone who's evaluated almost every LCD projector ever designed for home theater, though, I have to say I'm heartened I can recommend four out of the five projectors in this Face Off (the expensive Sharp being the only exception).

—Brent Butterworth

**After looking at these** projectors, my 27-inch Sony TV at home will never look the same; it seems like a 13-inch now. My new apartment has a projector-sized off-white wall that stares at me from behind the Sony. I was really impressed with the improvement in these projectors over the last few years.

The AmPro, the Runco, and the Sharp (less expensive model) were ones I'd take right now. I don't have \$10,000 right now, so *take* is the right word. I was shocked at how bright the Sanyo was as it filled a large wall in the photography studio. It looked great, much better at the larger size than smaller. It was surprising to see its poor performance on the test patterns we looked at. The centerfield camera from a baseball game had the players life size. What a way to watch a game. If I had a wall about the size of a barn, the Sanyo would be the way to go. It's also interesting to think about using its computer ports for immersive game play and Internet surfing.

The AmPro was very watchable and I was struck by the lack of visible pixels I usually expect from LCD projectors. The Runco's strengths were



its picture, its tiny size, and its lack of machine noise. All things considered, the Runco probably impressed me for its size/performance ratio as much as the Sanyo on large images. The Sharp projectors were a big surprise, of course. The price difference just couldn't be justified in my eyes.

—Brian Clark

**First, I must admit** that I've never been a big fan of LCD projectors in general. I've spent too much time viewing really good CRT projectors to be able to tolerate LCD's eccentricities, which are many, and, in some cases, severe. Still, I've always appreciated the portability of LCD units, and generally enjoy setting them up (a procedure which essentially consists of plugging it in, aiming the light beam at a screen, and focusing the lens). If you've ever tried to converge the three tubes on a CRT projector, you'll know what I'm getting at.

The performance of the Runco and AmPro projectors exceeded that of the other units in the Face Off by a considerable degree. I'd be happy with either one, though the Runco ultimately had the edge in terms of image uniformity, accurate color balance, and picture detail. Both of these projectors had a wide array of features that would make them attractive to users on many levels—home theater, presentations, etc.—and in my opinion any display device that has the ability to display images from a computer, as well as NTSC video, is a solid investment in these times of converging technologies.

The Sharp XV-H37U was an impressive performer for its price, which just happens to be \$5,000 less than most of the other models in the Face Off. Even so, the few problems it did have were serious enough to make me think twice about using it—or think about coughing up twice as much cash to get a Runco LCD unit, and suffer relatively few compromises in image quality. The Sanyo wins the LCD Face Off in terms of sheer industrial-grade image projection power. Oddly enough, the larger the Sanyo's image is blown up, the less visible are its anomalies. So remember to project really large images from the PLC-700M. You'll be happy that you did.

—Al Griffin



Hales Concept HC center and surround speakers  
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# HOME THEATER THAT SOUNDS SO GOOD, YOU MIGHT FORGET TO TURN ON THE TV.

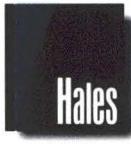


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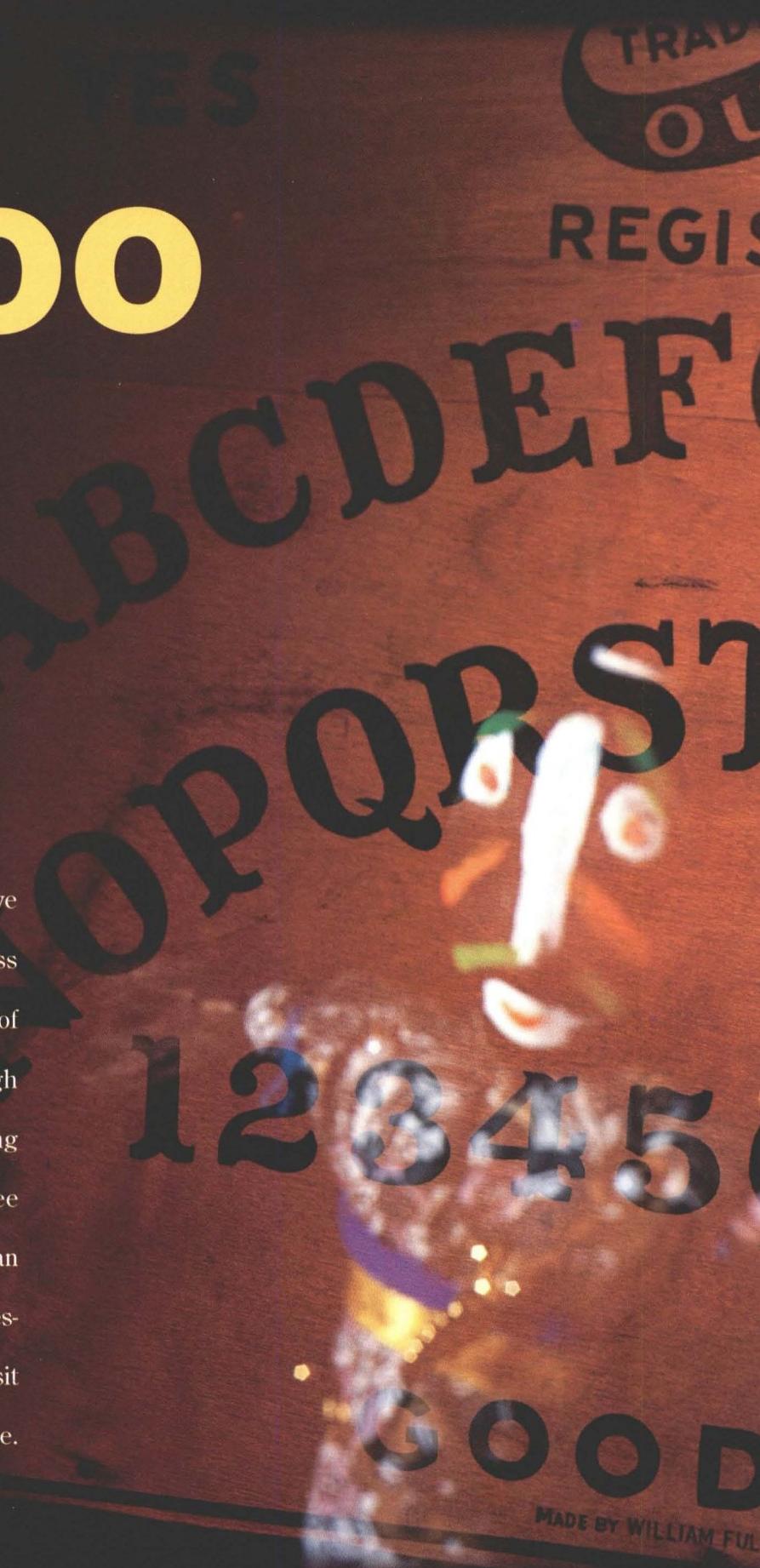
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RED

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789

BYE

NO



Do those cones, bricks, and other assorted gimcracks really improve your system's sound? Our "voodoo accessories"

Face Off pits a half-dozen tweaks against an open-minded (but admittedly skeptical) listening panel.



by Brent Butterworth



## Do That Voodoo That You Do

For some reason, high-end audio has become a breeding ground for unproven, unscientific ideas, which result in unproven, unscientific products. You've seen 'em: the eight zillion little cones and discs you can use to support your electronics, the green pens and demagnetizers that supposedly make your CDs sound like records, and the *really* bizarre stuff like clocks you plug into the wall to "treat" your AC line. If you haven't seen these "voodoo" accessories, otherwise known as "tweaks," check out any mail-order high-end audio catalog. You'll see pages and pages of this stuff, all with testimony from the manufacturers that their products *really, really* work. Usually, they're even willing to go so far as to say their product works better than an equally

wacky but practically identical one. And the "scientific" reasoning behind these products usually provokes hearty guffaws from anyone who has enough of a grasp of science to have passed the eighth grade.

Look, we can usually leave well enough alone—if some guy wants to believe that drinking snake urine will make him more virile, or that the mighty Norse god Thor will strike him down unless he casts a smoked salmon into the Long Island Sound every month, or that placing a tiny wooden disc atop his amp will transform its sound, it's certainly none of our business. But when one manufacturer starts to claim that his brass-cone component feet are the "fastest" made, we've just got to stick our noses in, even though the high-end audio industry would probably rather we didn't.

Don't get the idea that this is some sort of witch hunt, though, because we *do* believe that some of this stuff can work. Although none of the *HT* editors is the type who'll spend hours and hours fiddling with audio tweaks, all of us have heard certain tweak products make noticeable improvements in the sound of our systems. We even use a couple of them ourselves.

We decided to test these voodoo accessories in the most revealing home theater system we could muster: a Pioneer CLD-99 laserdisc player, connected to a Proceed DAP digital-to-analog converter, which in turn

**There's no doubt that the little red button in the middle of the Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier was fun to play with, but its effects were a bit less apparent.**



drove a Chiro C-800 preamp/processor and a Lexicon 312 three-channel amplifier, which we connected to the super-accurate NHT VT-2 tower speakers we use as a reference. We used a set of high-end interconnect and speaker cables from Synergistic Research, who also supplied one of the voodoo accessories we tested.

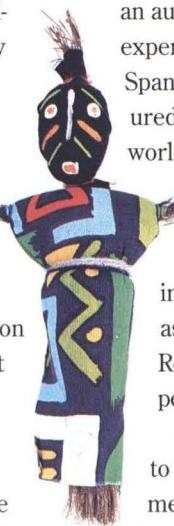
Al and I finished the system off with a couple of voodoo dolls that we'd each received as gifts. Turns out these dolls looked *almost identical!* Al thought it might be because both were bought as souvenirs in New Orleans, but I took it as a warning from the voodoo gods that we were about to uncover hidden truths that would shake the beliefs of many an audiophile.

Our listening panel included me; senior editor Al Griffin, who tried many of these kinds of products during his tenure with the high-end audio magazine *The Absolute Sound*; and drummer Alex Gonzalez, whom I met when I reviewed the first CD from his group, Lava and the Hot Rocks, in last month's issue. Turns out Alex is both a home theater enthusiast and an audio professional, with hands-on recording experience on a variety of music projects and with the Spanish-language TV network Telemundo. We figured Alex's blend of pro audio experience and real-world home theater enthusiasm (he's got a modest, receiver-based system at home) would give us the same kind of feedback the average *Home Theater* reader might give us. Also joining our panel for part of the test were our new associate editor Brian Clark, and VP/creative Robert Ross, a way-out-there audiophile for whom 99.99 percent of all audio gear simply isn't esoteric enough.

So which of the products we tried would turn out to be real voodoo, and which would be revealed as mere doo-doo? Only an exhaustive, day-long listening session could tell us.

### Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier

There was no doubt among our panelists about which product we'd start our session with, because while we had a table full of accessories ready for the tryin', we'd all been playing with one since we walked in: the \$125 Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier. That's because the Clarifier is the only voodoo accessory we tried that gives you something to interact with. It's this black tray thing with a spindle in the middle and a little red button in the corner that powers it up, sort of like one of those spin-art things that makes swirlies with paint. You just slap a CD on the spindle, hit the red button, and watch in amazement as the Clarifier does its thing.



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## Do That Voodoo That You Do

What does it do, exactly? Well, it spins the CD. It starts out slow, builds up speed, gets going *really* fast, then slows down. There's apparently some sort of electromagnet inside; I guess the magnetic field's supposed to have beneficial effects. Anyway, the Clarifier is cool to watch, and addictive to use. Just *try* not to push that red button when there's a CD loaded. We couldn't resist. Every time there was a break in the listening, you could hear the Clarifier kicking in—whoever sat next to it would invariably fire it up at any opportunity. "Man, look at that thing go!" Brian exclaimed as he pushed the Clarifier's red pleasure button over and over and over again.

I know you, as a trusting soul, will immediately accept the idea that spinning a CD before you

play it makes it sound better, but I'm a cynical professional, and I need convincing. Here's what the Clarifier's manual had to say: "As a result of the manufacturing process, combined with repeated use, the quality of the information on a compact disc suffers from noise distortion.... By treating the compact disc with the Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier, the noise distortion is significantly reduced. The results are improved sound quality, enhanced clarity, maximum audio realism, and expanded resolution." And so on and so forth.

Well, I for one don't want the noise in my system to be distorted—I demand *clean* noise. So I was eager to see what the Clarifier could do. We tried it with a variety of CDs, listening to them first un-Clarified, then Clarified. To the surprise of all of us, it actually seemed to do something. Here's what the crew had to say:

**Alex:** "I did hear a subtle difference—the bass sounded tighter, but otherwise it sounded the same."

**AI:** "The expectation of change causes one to hear 'differences' in the first five to 10 seconds. The sound appears to have more 'clarity,' but it's also possible that the power of suggestion is influencing perception."

**Brian:** "So what did you think of it?"

**AI:** "I didn't hear any difference."

Somebody had told us that the Clarifier makes the biggest difference on really crappy rock CDs. Fortunately, official HT photographer Randy Cordero's CD collection was right at hand. So we jettisoned the airy-fairy audiophile stuff and tried a Meat Loaf CD, which

besides being completely lame musically, proved to be one of the worst recordings we'd ever heard.

**Me:** "I thought it produced a bigger soundstage and sounded clearer, but that it made the sound thinner, and therefore *worse*."

**Brian:** "Anything that makes Meat Loaf thinner should get a big thumbs-up."

Our verdict on the Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier: While it's easily the best conversation piece of all the voodoo accessories we tried, its efficacy falls way on the dubious side.

### DH Cones/Michael Green's Audio Points

The practice of supporting your components on cones has been widespread ever since the Mod Squad (which evolved into electronics manufacturer McCormack Audio) created TipToes, a small, pointy brass cone that many felt transformed the sound of their turntable/CD player/whatever. Since then, lots of companies have come out with comparable products; most claim sonic superiority over the competition.

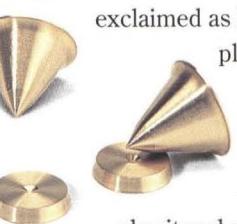
There's actually some no-nonsense science behind this practice. All audio gear—especially record, CD, and laserdisc players—can be adversely affected by vibration. When vibrated, various parts inside a component can start to put out a small electrical signal of their own, or vary slightly in the way they affect the audio signal. Focusing all the weight of your components on three tiny points does more to isolate them from vibration than the rubber-bottomed feet that come on the bottom of most components.

These cones tend to reduce the stability of a component on its shelf, and because we're constantly swapping gear in our reference systems, we don't bother with them. We had two sets of cones hanging around, though, so we decided to give 'em a try.

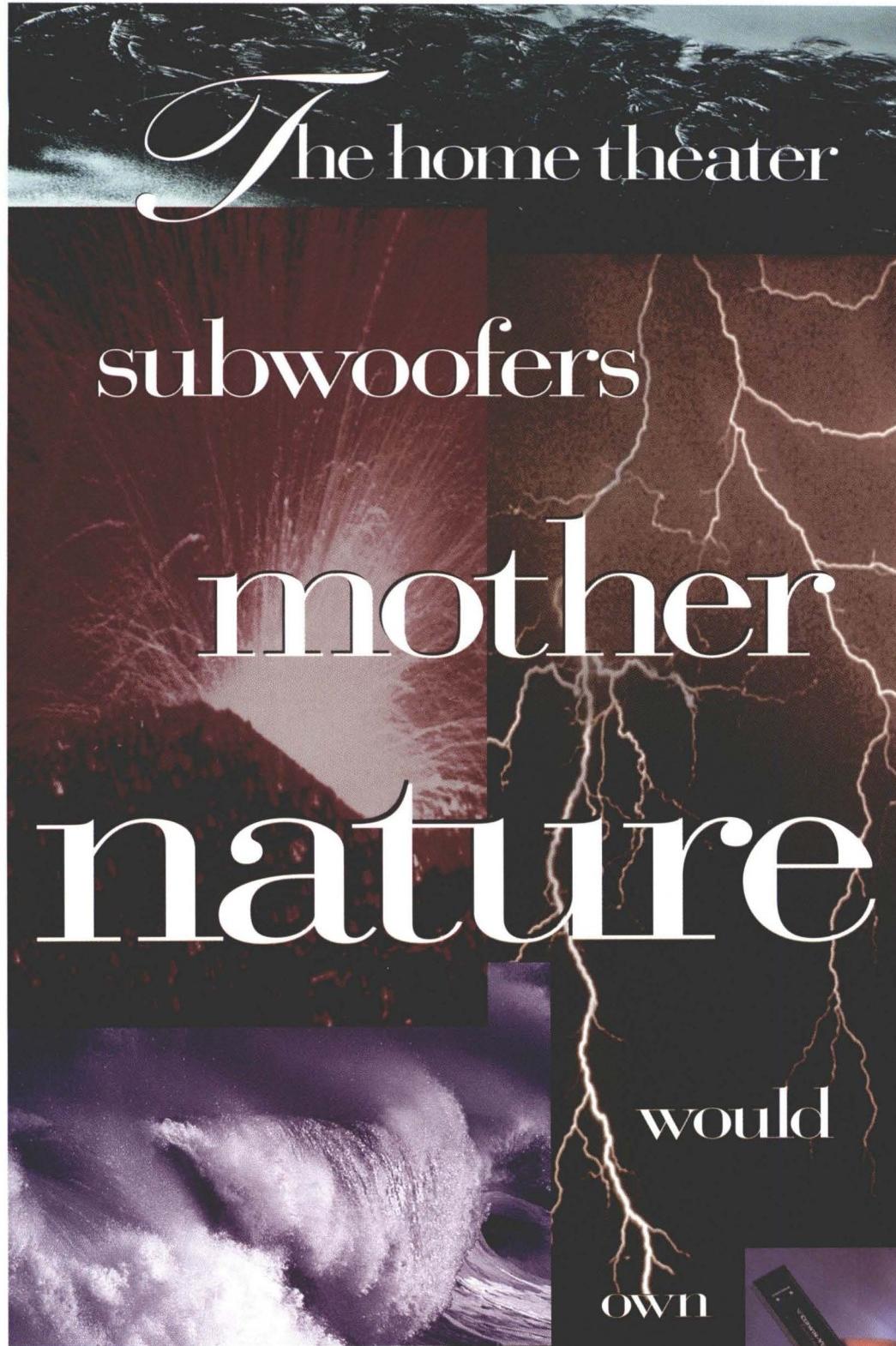
First, we tried DH Cones, three tiny black ceramic cones of a suggestive shape that had us giggling like Beavis and Butthead every time we used them. They're also available without the point, in a more rounded and conical version for those worried that their 12-year-old son will swipe the DH Cones for a schoolyard show 'n' tell. Golden Sound, the DH Cones' manufacturer, says they use a high-tech ceramic (also used in the Space Shuttle) surpassed in hardness only by diamonds.

We first listened to the system without tweaks, then tried placing the DH Cones under the laserdisc player. The entire panel agreed that the \$40 DH Cones improved the sound. "They kind of robbed the sound

**The Audio Points**  
**(above)** were  
awarded the title  
of "voodoo-iest" of  
the bunch—they  
actually worked!  
**Get your mind out of**  
**the gutter—we know**  
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124 Home Theater/October 1996



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## Do That Voodoo That You Do

of bass," Al said, "but the mids became much more focused and detailed." Alex agreed. "I did hear a noticeable difference," he said. "There was a little more top [treble], and the soundstage opened up." Brian and I pretty much agreed.

Golden Sound, the company that markets DH Cones, also offers bigger, beefier cones, and DH Squares, which are soft, half-inch-thick plastic squares that you can use on their own or with the cones.

Next, we tried Michael Green's Audio Points, which are made by the same company that created Room-Tunes acoustic treatment panels. The Audio Points use a sharper taper than your typical, garden-variety brass cone, with a flare at the top; they come with support discs that the points of the cones fit into.

The company promotes the \$59 (for a package of three) Audio Points as being the fastest energy-transfer device available. Hmm. We couldn't think of a way to test the speed of the cones—they're

just machined chunks of brass. We considered having a race by sliding them down a little ramp Pinewood Derby-style, or maybe dropping two cones Leonardo da Vinci-style to see which one falls fastest. I tried timing the energy transfer by placing a cone point on the tip of my finger, tapping the flat end with a hammer, and waiting for the energy from the tap to get the point. But with all the cones, the transfer seemed pretty fast—my finger was in pain long before I could hit the start button on my stopwatch.

However, the Audio Points definitely weren't the fastest when it came time to balance the laserdisc player on top of them. While unadorned cones are easy to slip under a component, lining up the Audio Points on their support discs wasn't easy. I'd get one and another would fall over. Finally, Alex helped me, and after some major LD-player wrasslin', we got the Audio Points up and running.

Whether or not the Audio Points are fast, they definitely had a bigger effect on the sound than the DH Cones. "The Audio Points are brighter-sounding than the ceramic cones," Al said. "The sound got louder with the Audio Points," Alex added, and much to my surprise, I thought he was right. Brian summed it up by saying that everything you get with the DH Cones, you get in spades with the Audio Points—more focus, more detail, but more thinness.



**Synergistic's A/C Master Coupler made a huge difference in the sound of our system: The soundstage was bigger and the imaging was better.**

The panel agreed that both the DH Cones and the Audio Points are serious voodoo. They actually work, they're inexpensive (at least compared to some of the tweaks we'll soon discuss), and they definitely give you more of that audiophile detail/imaging/soundstaging thing, at the expense of butt-kickin' bass. Alex is definitely sold—he tried some of the Audio Points under his Yamaha receiver the next day, and found they made a significant improvement. He's now trying to talk his dad (who plays in Lava and the Hot Rocks) into using the points under his bass amp!

### Synergistic Research A/C Master Coupler

We're big believers in high-quality cable—despite the jeers from the "objective" side of the audio field, the differences that good cable can make are pretty obvious. But we've always been skeptical about the fancy AC cables that most cable manufacturers offer. We've asked these manufacturers to explain how, after the AC current has gone through miles of whatever cable the power company tossed up on the poles, then through maybe 100 feet of Romex inside your walls, stringing a fancy cable from the wall socket to your amp could possibly make a difference. And we'd never received an even remotely coherent answer.

Al and I recently met with Ted Denny of Synergistic Research, who gave us this big spiel about how great his AC cables are. I asked Ted how AC cables could possibly make a difference, and he gave me some great analogy that I can't remember exactly. I think it was something like how water goes through hundreds of feet of fire hose, then is focused into a tight, directed stream right at the end. That made some sense to us, sort of, so we decided to give Ted's cables a shot.

Synergistic's A/C Master Coupler uses a separate shielded cable for each leg of the AC line; both run inside a woven jacket. The plug's massive and sturdy, as is the IEC connector on the other end. Obviously, this cable will only work with amps, processors, D/A converters, and laserdisc players that have IEC-type AC connectors—if your component has a conventional, captive power cord, you can't use the Master Coupler or any other fancy AC cord. And it ain't cheap: A six-footer costs \$250.

"Am I hearing things?" Robert asked when he first listened to the A/C Master Coupler. No, he wasn't, because all the rest of us heard the same thing, which was basically more. More highs, more (and more distinct) lows, and especially, more imaging and a bigger soundstage. In non-audiophile terms, that means the

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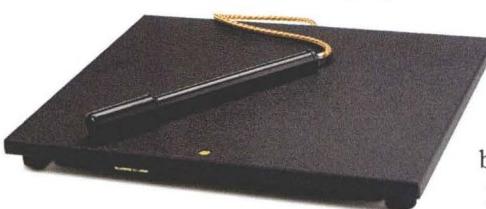
sound seemed to spread out across a bigger portion of the front of the room, and the sonic images became more focused, so that it almost seemed like real instruments were playing right there in the room. And this was just with one A/C Master Coupler connected to the Lexicon amp. With another connected to the DAP D/A converter, the sound got even better. Not only did it sound better than a generic AC cord, it also sounded clearly better than the AudioQuest high-end AC cable we had been using.

There's one problem with the Master Coupler: It tends to fall out of the AC socket. Because the cable's so heavy and stiff, a conventional AC socket can't hold the plug tightly enough. By sort of propping the cable up to keep it pushed in the socket, we were able to get

it to work. Installing one of those orange, medical-grade AC sockets, which grips the plug very tightly, would probably fix the problem.

Much, much, much to our sur-

prise, the Master Coupler makes as big a difference as good speaker cable—maybe an even bigger difference. This one's definitely big-time voodoo, and it's earned a full-time residency in our listening room.



**The Seismic Sink  
won't keep your  
\$15,000 preamp/  
processor gently  
floating on air during  
the next "big one,"  
but it will undoubt-  
edly improve the  
sound of your system.**

### Townshend Seismic Sink

Well, if the cones worked, we figured maybe this thing might, too. Rather than giving your components a firmer connection to your rack, though, the \$369 Seismic Sink actually floats them above it. It consists of two heavy pieces of metal, separated by an air bladder. You fill up the bladder using a little pump that looks like the ones that you use to fill basketballs. There's an LED on the front that blinks until the bladder's sufficiently filled, and when it needs to be reinflated. There's also a bubble level on the front; you use this, along with the Sink's four adjustable feet, to get your component perfectly level.

The idea here is that the air bladder floats your component and thus isolates it from any vibrations that might occur in your floor or rack. And let's not forget—your system itself is a major source of vibration, especially if you've got a good subwoofer. If you live in Manhattan, where the entire island suffers from a continual, low-level vibration (just touch your hand to any solid floor or street in the borough and you'll see what I mean), the Sink presumably will produce even greater benefits.

I've grown really tired of hearing from audio critics how a certain tweak "transformed" their system, only to try the tweak myself and find that it barely makes a difference. These guys exaggerate very minor sonic differences to the point that a lot of the people who read A/V magazines take every review with a grain of salt. If you're reading audio reviews with a skeptical eye, good: It's a wise practice with *any* kind of review, be it amplifier, restaurant, or opera. But put aside that practice for a moment, because the Seismic Sink really does transform your system.

When we placed a Sink under the Pioneer laserdisc player, I was completely blown away by the improvements it made in the sound, even on recordings by Sting and T.J. Kirk (an all-guitars jazz group), neither of which have much detail, imaging, or any of that audiophile stuff. Here's what the panelists had to say:

**AI:** "It did some of the same nice things to the top end as the cones did, but really brought out the dynamics and bass."

**Alex:** "I definitely noticed an improvement—it added a lot of sparkle to the top end."

**AI:** "Both of the cones messed up the sound in certain ways; this doesn't."

**Alex:** "Yeah!"

**Me:** "Adding this thing is like changing from an inexpensive Rotel amp to a Bryston—the Rotel sounds real good, but when you go to the Bryston (which costs maybe three times the price), you get clearer treble, more distinct bass, and a smoother midrange. Basically, everything gets better. And the Sink has the same effect."

You might have read audio reviews that end with, "It sounds so good I bought one!" And that's how I was going to end the writeup on the Seismic Sink. But it rings hollow, because what you don't read in those reviews is that the writer always gets the component at an accommodation price: maybe 50 percent of list. And in a lot of cases, the manufacturer just gives the component to the writer. So honestly, here's what I'm going to do with the Sink: I'm going to bring it home, and hope they don't ask us to send it back. If they do, I'll gladly pay the accommodation price. But I can say if I were looking to upgrade my CD playback system (which I am), I'd cough up the full \$369 for this thing long before I'd pay for a more expensive player, D/A converter, or digital cable. Actually, \$369's a stone-cold bargain for a tweak that's this well-made and so



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## Do That Voodoo That You Do

astonishingly effective in a field of expensive accessories that often don't work and look like they cost \$10 to build. The Seismic Sink is real live voodoo. If those dolls you stick with a pin worked even a tenth as well as the Sink, there wouldn't be a single sixth-grade teacher, baseball umpire, or IRS auditor alive today.

### Shakti Stone

A lot of audio tweaks have a sort of quasi-religious aspect to them—many of the manufacturers in this field tend to talk about strange energy fields and vibrations that, while invisible and imperceptible to the eyes and fingers, have a dramatic effect on the sound of hi-fi systems. When pitching their products, some of these manufacturers actually come across more like ministers than audio engineers.

With a Hindi name and a wave pattern carved into its top, the Shakti Stone clearly falls into this camp. The \$230 Shakti Stone sits atop your components, preferably directly above the power transformer. It's supposed to act as a sort of sink for the electromagnetic fields coming off the power supply and other internal parts, soaking up this energy before it can interfere with the audio signal. Contrary to our initial impressions, it's not supposed to act as any sort of mechanical damping device.

We started with Shakti Stones above the transformers of our Lexicon amp, the Chiro processor, the Pioneer laserdisc player, and the Power

Wedge AC line conditioner that we plugged the processor, the LD player, and the D/A converter into. The oldsters on the panel—34-year-old me and 40-year-old Robert—couldn't hear any difference at all, on any of the recordings we tried. However, the younger panelists, who have superior hearing at extreme high frequencies, clearly heard something. When I took the Shakti Stones off all the components, played "Rosanna" from the Mobile Fidelity-remastered CD *Toto IV*, then placed a Shakti Stone atop the amp, Al (age 29) and Alex (20) both looked at each other in surprise. Here's the scoop:

**Al:** "I hear what it's doing, but it's just taking away the extreme high-frequency detail, and that's what we use these NHTs to hear."

**Alex:** "Yeah, you lose the overing on the cymbals. I'd take the CD Clarifier over these—at least it makes that cool sound when you turn it on."



After using the Shakti Stone (above right), Robert unveiled his very own bit of voodoo: a ceramic bit he likes to call the Shakti Toad (above).



### What Do You Think?

One of the most frustrating things about getting into high-end audio is the snobbiness of its practitioners. If you say you can't hear the effect of a new cable, a different D/A converter, or an esoteric resonance-control device, they act like there's something wrong with you—either you can't hear, or you're just not experienced enough. It took me a few years of reviewing audio gear to realize that if you can't hear the improvement, it's not really there. Believe me, the high-end audio business is full of people who greatly exaggerate the significance of barely audible differences, or who give in to peer pressure and state that there's a difference when there's not. Now, when I find a product like the Shakti Stone that simply doesn't work as advertised, I get angry, especially when faced with the condescending attitudes of people who have fooled themselves into believing that the product works. If you get this kind of treatment in a store, I'd strongly recommend flipping off the salesman and walking out.

It's a shame that the profusion of products that don't really work has given audio accessories a bad name, though, because products like the Synergistic Research A/C Master Coupler and the Townshend Seismic Sink really do increase your enjoyment of your system, which is what it's all about. They're a great way to have fun blowing a few bucks when you're between major equipment purchases.

—Brent Butterworth

When I was asked to participate in the voodoo accessory Face Off, I had no idea what to expect. Especially after Brent told me we were going to check out a sink, some stones and cones, and a toad. These were audio accessories? What was he talking about? But he was serious, and after I saw the accessories he was talking about, I was curious to find out what they could do.

Of all the accessories we checked out, I can recommend two wholeheartedly: the Seismic Sink and the Audio Points. Both produced a detailed soundstage, with extended clarity and

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## Do That Voodoo That You Do

Robert was curious to see if the Shakti's *very* subtle effects were actually due to some sort of electromagnetic sink properties, or just because its weight had a mild vibration-damping effect. So he pulled out his own, improvised audio tweak: a heavy ceramic toad he got in L.A.'s Chinatown. It's a three-legged toad, which is said to give you good luck in business; apparently, many Chinese businesses keep one of these toads (with a coin in its mouth) on the premises. It also has this cool yin 'n' yang sign on its forehead, and Chinese characters carved around its base. Robert dubbed it the Shakti Toad, and I tried placing it atop the Lexicon amp, then removing it, then replacing it with a Shakti Stone while the other panelists listened. Let's let them share their feelings with you:

**AI:** "There's a very slight muting of the highs, but it's more subtle than the Shakti Stone. It actually removes sonic 'grit' and slightly improves resolution. It's a nice balance between the Shakti Stone and...nothing."

**Alex:** "Plus, it looks really bad-ass sitting on top of the amp. At least with this thing, it makes your system look cool, so it might get you laid."

**AI:** "I don't think it'll help. Audiophiles get laid even less than model-train enthusiasts."

**Me:** "I feel comfortable saying that the Shakti Toad will improve your chances of getting laid every bit as much as it improves your sound."

Clearly, our Face Off had degraded into the usual nonsense that occurs after a day of hard listening. We all retired to the nearest Mexican restaurant, happy to have found some really effective and affordable new ways to improve our systems: Al and I with Seismic Sinks and A/C Master Couplers under our arms, Alex with a handful of brass and ceramic cones, and Robert with his Shakti Toad to restore to its proper place overseeing the thousands of dollars in checks and invoices flowing through his office. ☺

### Ultra CD Clarifier \$125

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(208) 667-8300

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Golden Sound  
P.O. Box 1293, McLean, VA 22101  
(703) 847-2617

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UltraSystems  
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(215) 297-0227

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Synergistic Research  
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### Seismic Sink \$350

Townshend Audio  
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(713) 266-3406

### Shakti Stone \$230

Musical Surroundings  
5856 College Ave., Suite 146, Oakland, CA 94618  
(510) 420-0379

### Shakti Toad \$60 as tested, \$20 to \$200 depending on materials

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definition in varying degrees. The Seismic Sink's audio magic was the most noticeable, bringing a realism and depth to the sound that left me amazed. (Every serious audiophile should consider purchasing at least one.) The Points produced almost the same sound as the Sink, but in a more subtle fashion.

The most interesting-looking accessories were the Shakti Stone and the Shakti Toad, but unfortunately, looks were about all they offered. I felt they both degraded the sound, producing a muffled top end and a dull, lifeless soundstage.

So in short, skip the Stone and the Toad, get your hands on the Sink, and get the Points.

—Alex "Speedy" Gonzalez

As a person who, for better or worse (sometimes I think both terms would apply), has spent a good deal of time hanging around audiophiles, I know that there are many people out there who take tweaks and accessories seriously. I remember the first time I demoed the Bedini Ultra CD Clarifier for a group of such geeks: It was as though a spirit had entered the room, so spooked were they by the audible differences.

Of course, the differences for me were incredibly minor, and, over the long term, negligible. I had heard certain tweaks make an authentic difference in a system's sound quality, and these were the ones that left a lasting impression on me. The Seismic Sink is a tweak that I heard make an \$8,000 CD transport sound like a \$15,000 CD transport; when you're talking about gear at those price levels, \$369 extra is not that much to spend.

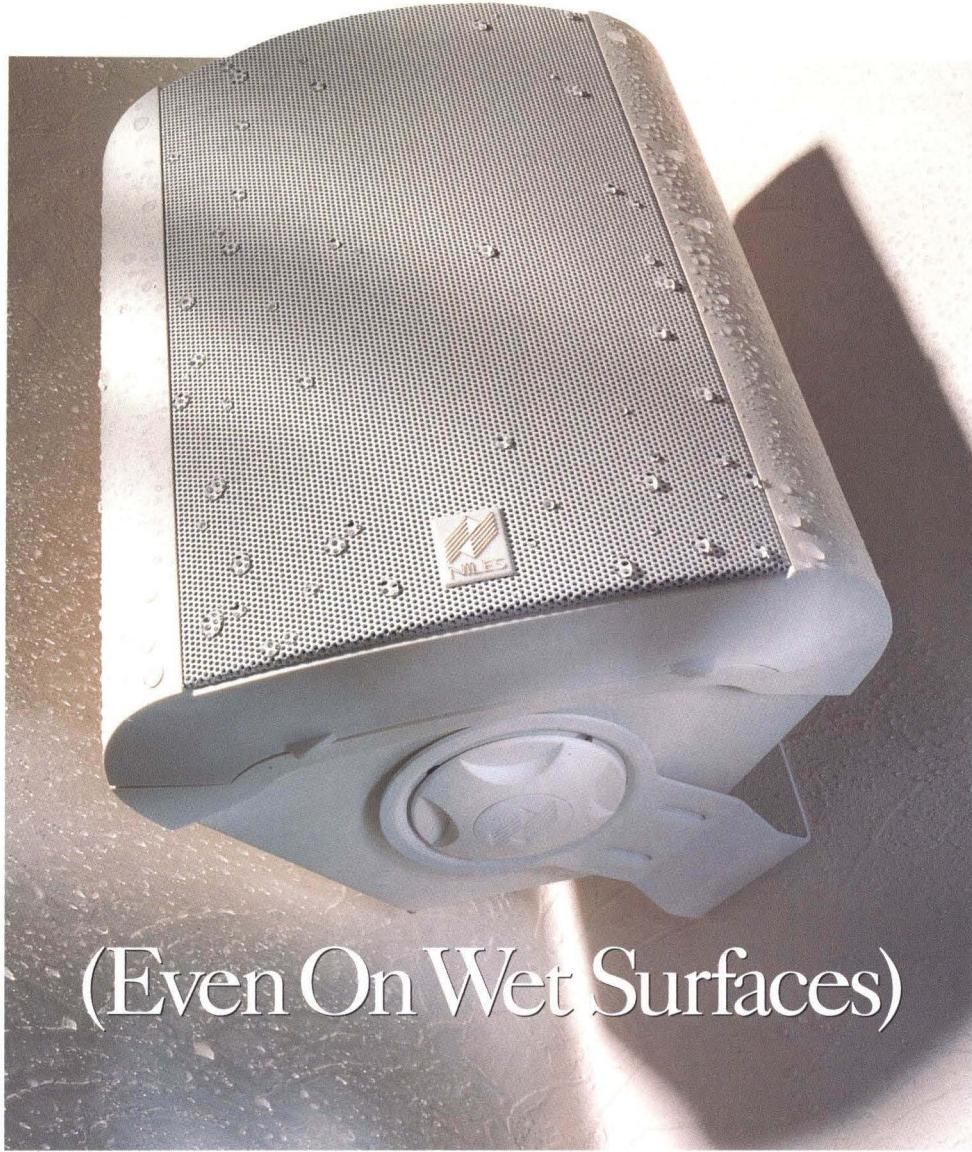
Home Theater readers should exercise caution when checking out tweaks and accessories at dealer showrooms, or perusing them in the pages of audio catalogs. A lot of tweak-pushers will claim that their goods work just as well on video as they do on audio, which in most cases will be pure, unadulterated lies, or, at the very least, exaggeration. We've personally tried several tweaks on video gear, and never noticed any differences to speak of.

—AI Griffin

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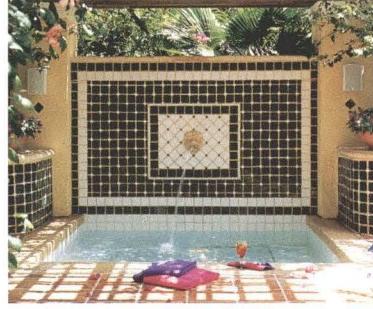
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**the 13th, John Carpenter**

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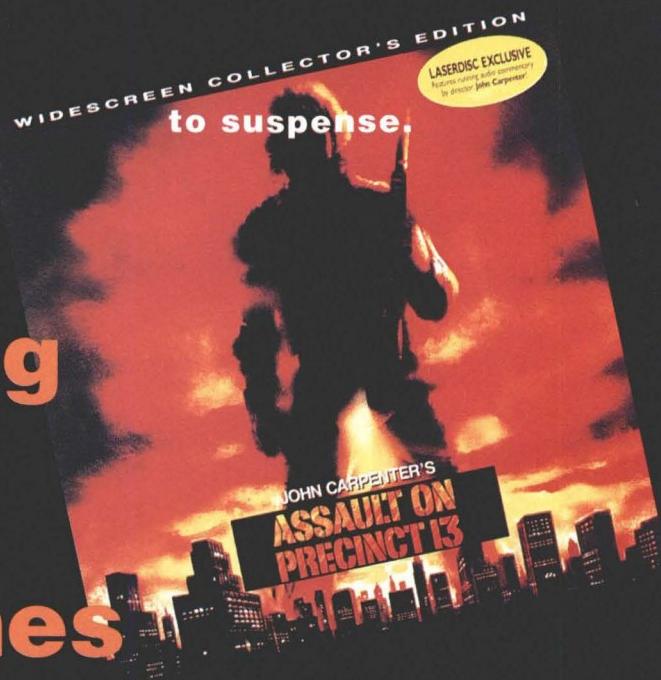
**the hearts of wayward**

**teenagers the world over.**

**Dan Yakir takes you**

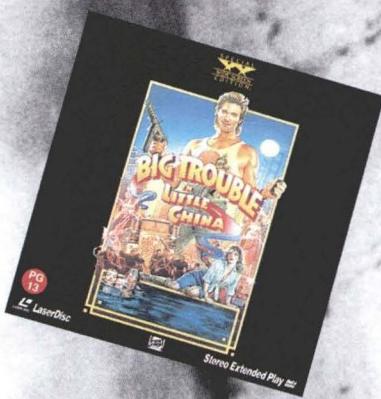
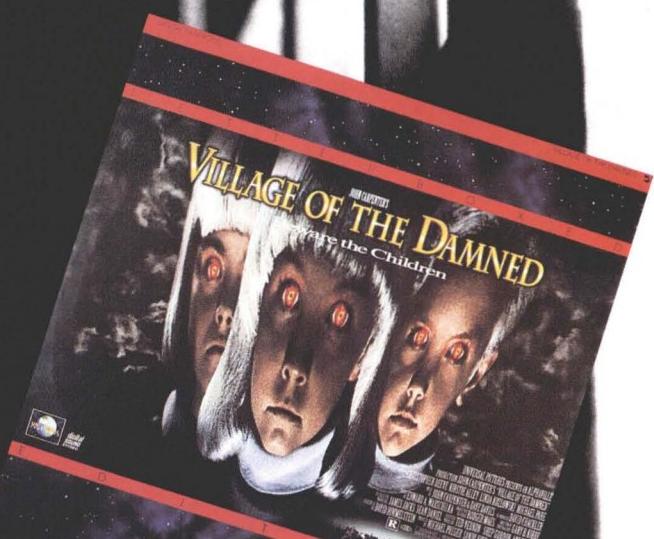
**through some of his best**

**films, ranging from splatter**



# Something Wicked This Way Comes

He has established himself as one of the best genre directors around—and tried his hand at just about every one there is: horror, sci-fi, ghost stories, action-adventure. In most of his work, John Carpenter has manifested a tireless originality and a cinematic sensibility in sync with the macabre. While his early movies (*Assault on Precinct 13*, *The Fog*, *Halloween*) were also scripted and



## Something Wicked This Way Comes

scored by him, establishing him as a triple threat, his later films benefited from the contribution of screen-writers, and from the director's own growing technical expertise. The charm of Carpenter's films is the adolescent sensibility they exude that corresponds to the child in all of us. He knows how to make us jump out of our seats and find pleasure in the pounding of our hearts.

The recently released *Escape from L.A.*—a follow-up to his best-known picture, the futuristic thriller *Escape from New York* (both starring his favorite actor Kurt Russell)—is the first sequel he's ever done. It's commendable that the filmmaker distanced himself early on from the *Halloween* franchise (he did co-script part two), preferring to seek original projects worthy of his talent.

Here are some of his best films available on laserdisc.

### **Assault on Precinct 13 (1977)**

Perhaps Carpenter's best and least-known film, *Assault* is a taut action thriller with a romantic core, not unlike the later Westerns of Howard Hawks that it

member by a man who seeks refuge in the station, a man who repaid his daughter's senseless murder by gunning down the hood who did it. We never see the

faces of the dozens of gang members because this is a clandestine and impersonal evil. As they keep coming, like hordes of insects, through doors, windows, and tunnels, the besieged shoot them down in masterfully choreographed action sequences, which are greatly aided by Carpenter's

gliding camera movement and effective use of the 2.35:1 aspect ratio.

The real protagonists—Bishop (Austin Stoker), an affable police lieutenant on his first night of duty; Leigh (Laurie Zimmer), a cool female cop; and the main prisoner, a notorious killer named Napoleon Wilson (Darwin Joston)—interact with each other in intriguing ways, often coming up with unexpectedly potent emotions. Leigh is stoic and brave, fighting alongside the guys without complaint, and develops a mute understanding with both cop and prisoner: with her fellow cop it's a tender bond of appreciation and camaraderie; with the prisoner it's a sexual tension that denotes an attraction that is, of course, hopeless. That's why, when the nightmare's over, she leaves without a word—exchanging just one long look at the men. By contrast, the cop and the prisoner also develop a mutual respect because they are forced to relate to each other as humans with a shared fate, rather than focusing on what divides them. The cop insists on accompanying his new ally out uncuffed, as he is to continue his journey to death row.

Carpenter's own score adds to the buildup of suspense: It starts with drums and percussion, introducing either evil intent or action, but it also has minor keys reserved for the tender moments. Stylish and innovative, this made-for-a-pittance (\$200,000) original has the feel of hungry artistry, of a powerful vision seeking realization, and this explains much of its appeal. The entire project is so well-realized, so clever, so full of dignity, that I'd call it a small masterpiece.

The letterboxed laserdisc from Image is excellent, faithfully recreating the browns and yellows of both decor and lighting that contributed so much to the claustrophobic impact of the picture. This collector's edition features commentary by the filmmaker. Not to be missed.

**Alien children with glowing eyes capable of inducing mind control take over a small town in *Village of the Damned*.**



resembles. When a faceless multiracial gang attacks an abandoned police precinct in a rough L.A. neighborhood, the two cops and two prisoners inside must fight for their lives, like soldiers defending the fort.

Although the movie opens with a police massacre of gang members, which gives them a "motive" to strike back, they're also out to avenge the death of a





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# Something Wicked This Way Comes

## Halloween (1978)

In addition to being Carpenter's first commercial success, *Halloween* won plenty of deserved critical acclaim, too. This horror tale is about a demented murderer who is put away in an asylum for the childhood killing of his own sister. Fifteen years later, he escapes and returns to his Illinois hometown to murder every female teenager he can lay hands on in commemoration of his first killing. Michael, who is masked and often referred to as "it" by the doctor who had once treated him (Donald Pleasence), is indeed a faceless force of evil who often targets the promiscuous. Not only does his sister meet her end after a sexual liaison, but two babysitters (Nancy Loomis and P.J. Soles) and a hapless boyfriend also have to pay for their fun and games by being slashed, impaled, and strangled. Although Michael also goes after Laurie (the lovely Jamie Lee Curtis in her film debut), she manages to survive and even inflict serious damage on him, precisely because she's virginal and doesn't have boys all around her. This kind of puritanism might not be politically correct, but it doesn't hurt the film's dramatic development.

Carpenter has a knack for making an eerie and ominous impending horror as inevitable as the mundane activities of the babysitters and the kids they're in



Michael on the prowl (her girlfriends don't see him and therefore dismiss her) and then the boy Tommy's sighting of the "bogeyman" across the street (this time it's Laurie herself who doesn't listen). Also, most effective is Carpenter's contribution to the horror genre—an invincible villain with supernatural forces. In this particular case, he doesn't possess powers beyond his own physical prowess, but he can't be killed, either. This was the first time a character who is stabbed and falls several flights down to the street below simply disappears instead of becoming a corpse. This has become a genre staple since (it was done by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator*,

Pirates return from the dead in *The Fog* (right). Jamie Lee Curtis made her big-screen debut in the John Carpenter-directed, -scripted, and -scored *Halloween* (below and top right).



sister from outside the house through the eye slots of his Halloween mask. It goes back and forth from door to window to stairway, not only familiarizing us thoroughly with the scene of the crime, but building up dramatic tension. Similarly, Carpenter uses the "now you see him, now you don't" trick repeatedly in the film, deflecting Laurie's warnings when she sees

charge of. He creates suspense with a wonderfully mobile subjective camera that isn't limited to the killer's point of view. The movie opens with a point-of-view shot of Michael as a boy spying on his



as a machine that wouldn't die). And the director's own score deserves special mention for its moody, foreboding, and catchy melodiousness.

There is a very big difference between watching this film in a cropped pan-and-scan version and the original aspect ratio, which allows the camera enough space to move hauntingly about. Voyager has a superb letterboxed transfer in both CLV and CAV Criterion editions. The CAV version, which was made from a 35mm print minted from the original negative, is truly flawless in every respect. It includes commentary from Carpenter, producer Debra Hill, and star Jamie Lee Curtis, as well as footage shot for the TV release, filmographies of the director and actors, and essays on the making of the film and "splatter" films in general. Highly recommended.

## The Fog (1980)

Carpenter's attempt to update the ghost story is an effective moody horror tale that takes place in a small seaside California town. The various characters aware of the nature of the creeping fog—a truck driver

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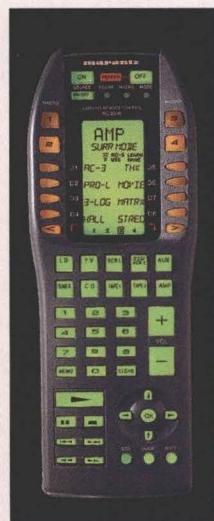
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Lawrence E. Ullman,  
Stereophile Guide to Home Theater, Summer 1996

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## Something Wicked This Way Comes

(Tommy Atkins) and a hitchiker (Jamie Lee Curtis); a society woman and her aide (Janet Leigh and Nancy Loomis); a priest (Hal Holbrook)—find shelter in an old church, as the local radio station DJ (Adrienne Barbeau, the director's wife in her film debut) keeps warning one and all to escape.

The filmmaker creates a spooky atmosphere that lends this modest film its appeal, but what prevents it from being an all-out success is his failure to create the menacing fog as a mythical entity in its own right. After all, reason doesn't play much of a role in this kind of film. Here the murderous spree is an attempt to avenge the fate suffered by pirates 100 years earlier when they crashed on that shore and their gold was stolen. So behind the fog we get the ghostly figures of zombified pirates who are doing the killings. This is too literal to be satisfying.

Otherwise, *The Fog* is an eerie, funny ghost story that's visually captivating and musically on target with the director's own rhythmic score.

This New Line Home Video laserdisc, manufactured by Image, is of excellent quality, with crystal-clear images, good contrast, and realistic flesh tones.

police. The woman (Karen Allen) near whose house he lands, first considers herself his hostage and then befriends him. She eventually learns to love him,

partly because he assumes the appearance of her beloved dead husband, but mostly because she learns that he's kind, guileless, and full of appreciation for life's precious moments. She becomes an accomplice determined to see him reach his destination: an Arizona crater where a spaceship will take him back home. To repay her love, he gives her a child, a rare gift because she's barren and he, on the other hand, can heal and even restore life.

Jeff Bridges shines in a role that requires innocence and gentleness, and his abrupt, almost reptilian, movements are very convincing and just offbeat enough. The special effects—from the original landing and meteor crash, through the alien's "birth" as a human baby and evolution into an adult in a matter of moments, to the appearance of the huge spaceship in the end—are uniformly first-class. But it's to Carpenter's credit that they never overshadow the finer human moments.

This letterboxed laserdisc from Columbia/TriStar is exceptionally good; the images are crisp and sharp, and the colors natural and vivid. It's remarkably free of graininess in the night scenes. Grade-A entertainment with an uplifting message.

### **Big Trouble in Little China** (1986)

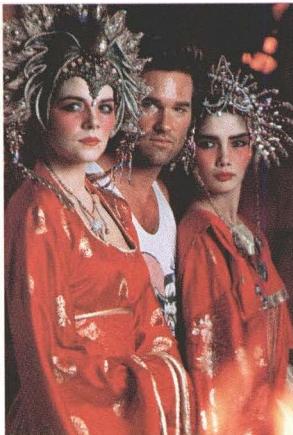
This little-seen, critically abused gem is one of my favorite Carpenter films. It's a sophisticated, mystical action-adventure—with a little comedy and kung fu mixed into a ghost story—that masquerades as low-brow entertainment. The hero, Jack Burton (the affecting Kurt Russell) is a good-natured trucker recruited by pal Wang Chi (Dennis Dun) to help him free his beautiful bride-to-be Miao Yin (Suzze Pai) from the clutches of the mysterious, enormously powerful David Lo Pan (James Hong), who controls a number of fighters and creatures. Aided by spunky lawyer Gracie Law (the lovely Kim Cattrall), they invade the underbelly of Chinatown, engage in spectacular battle with Lo Pan's troops, and finally confront a most-feared Chinese legendary figure who is really a 2,000-

**Big Trouble in Little China was an amalgam of the action-adventure, comedy, kung fu, and ghost story genres.**



### **Starman** (1984)

This tender-hearted science-fiction love story is one of the filmmaker's most fully realized films. It's the story of an alien (Jeff Bridges) who comes to Earth at the invitation of the world's nations (included in a satellite message beamed to outer space), but finds himself hunted down as an enemy by security forces and



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## Something Wicked This Way Comes

year-old ghost who yearns to regain a flesh-and-blood existence with a young green-eyed beauty. Both Miao Yin and Gracie have green eyes and the ghost intends to marry both—and he almost gets his wish in the explosive, ornate finale.

It's an old-style adventure picture (it resembles 1940s serials) with a fast-moving plot, but with numerous entertaining and exotic asides that make it an unmitigated pleasure to watch. It's also hilarious, especially in the film's constant lampooning of Burton's macho bravado: We get to see him hesitant, fearful, and awed by the forbidden world he's being exposed to, but he never admits a weakness, including his attraction to Gracie (they only get to kiss once). In fact, while he's supposed to take the lead—and has the physique to prove it—it's his slight Chinese pal who does most of the fighting, reducing Jack to the role of a sidekick. Despite this tongue-in-cheek approach, Carpenter is very respectful of Chinese culture and customs, which is evident in the number of intelligent supporting characters and authenticity of the decor. Whenever you see Chinese characters on

**Police officers defend themselves against the faceless evil of gangs in *Assault on Precinct 13* (top right). Jeff Bridges plays a visitor from another galaxy in *Starman* (below).**



Courtesy of Columbia/TriStar Home Video

signs and banners, they really stand for the ideas expressed. The kung fu battle scenes are beautifully choreographed (it certainly doesn't hurt that the film was shot in widescreen), the creatures are state of the art, and the overall atmosphere is as absorbing as it is mesmerizing.

Don't miss this exhilarating little treasure, available in letterbox from Fox Video. The quality of this laserdisc is exceptional, with an attention to detail that leaves nothing to be desired.

### Village of the Damned (1995)

It might not be the filmmaker's best effort to date, but *Village of the Damned* is a competent remake of the

1960 sci-fi thriller of the same name, which starred George Sanders and was directed by Wolf Rilla. Based on John Wyndham's novel, *The Midwich Cuckoos*, the two films depict an invisible alien presence that knocks the township's inhabitants off and impreg-



nates all the women. The newborns all share platinum-blond hair and eyes that light up when they concentrate to form a powerful, insidious form of mind control. They can order their "parents" to kill themselves, cops to shoot each other, and, generally, people to lay off. In the original, shot in black and white, the allegorical content had to do with the threat of Communism. Here, the movie elaborates on the paranoid notions of the past two decades, suggesting malevolent government experiments and illegal nuclear radiation. Kirstie Alley plays the scientist who has experimented on an alien fetus from a previous "invasion," and Christopher Reeve is the doctor who tries to teach the kids and reason with them and, when all else fails, destroy them.

Carpenter remade the original with restraint, the absence of which marred his earlier remake of *The Thing*: The original Howard Hawks production was an unseen, mysterious menace, which in the remake turned out to be an incredibly vicious, goo-oozing monster. Such explicitness killed the innocence inherent in the project, while *Village* retains this sense of wonder about the unknown as it toys with more sophisticated doomsday theories. Carpenter, the auteur, has made better films, but *Village of the Damned* is a competent commercial undertaking to keep us occupied while he waits for more personal projects.

The letterboxed laserdisc from MCA/Universal is sharply focused and color-corrected. ☺

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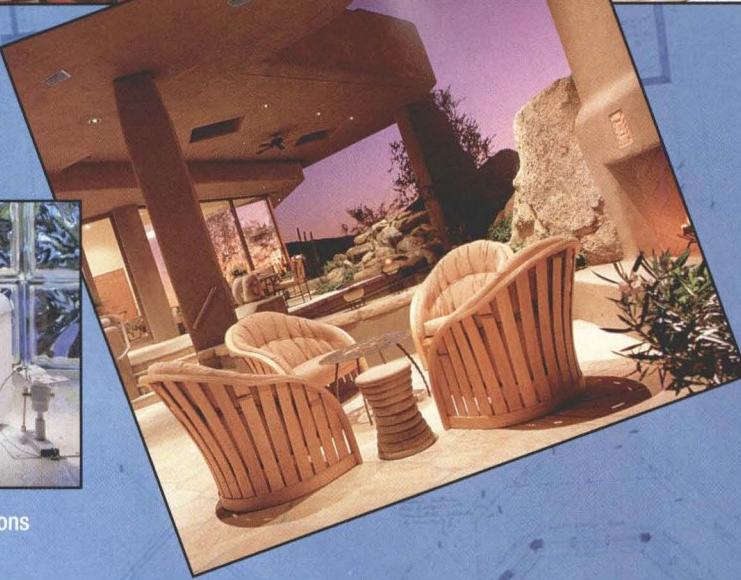
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# Grecian Formula

The only Greek thing missing from Woody Allen's *Mighty Aphrodite* is the tragedy.

by Christy Grosz



Certain topics of discussion just compel people to offer their opinions. Even if they're just passing by the conversation as it's going on, an unseen force makes them stop and volunteer their own thoughts on the matter at hand. For instance, any time anyone mentions Natalie Merchant, I tend to start making choking noises and saying stuff like, "Where did she get that John Fogerty accent that only shows up when she's singing?!?" Nobody asks me; I just provide my viewpoint and I *can't stop myself*. Woody Allen is another subject that seems to incite



some kind of unpredictable reaction out of otherwise rational people. They either begin muttering under their breath about that scandal from a few years ago or start gesturing wildly and proclaiming him a genius. Either way, it's weird. But whatever your opinion—and you *know* you have one—Allen has his own unique style. He toys with dialogue and structure like no one else.





## Green-Eyed Monster

The best place on the Web to find a cocktail to suit any occasion is HotWired's cocktail page at <http://www.hotwired.com/cocktail/>. Not only do they have a cocktail of the day, but they have a searchable database so you can find exactly what refreshment you're looking for, information on all the liquors and liqueurs, as well as advice for planning your next cocktail party. So put on a creepy laserdisc and enjoy this ghoulish take on the classic Manhattan.

—Christy Grosz



## Maker's Mark Bourbon

Every Southern boy remembers the first time he sneaked a taste from his dad's glass of bourbon. It's a nasty experience—tastes worse than cough syrup, and feels like battery acid going down. Most bourbon drinkers simply stick with it and grow accustomed to the edge, but there are actually some really good bourbons out there that are all smoky sweetness without the bite. The cheapest one I've found is Maker's Mark, which you can find in most liquor stores for about \$16 a fifth. Maker's is as smooth a bourbon as I've ever tried, even smoother than most of the \$40 high-end stuff. When other companies age bourbon, they stack the casks, and usually age the stuff at the top less, because it's much hotter at the top of the shed. Maker's, however, actually rotates the casks, so every cask is consistent. And the red wax seal gives it an eccentric, secret-stash-o-hooch appeal. With such great taste at a reasonable price, Maker's is like the NAD or Rotel of the bourbon industry.

—Brent Butterworth

## Hoyo de Monterrey Claro Presidente

With cigars being such a hot fad in L.A., veteran puffers need some way to distinguish themselves from the newbies. And this is it: This big, green cigar looks like nothing most

### Green-Eyed Monster

1½ ounces Irish whiskey    ¼ ounce Pernod  
½ ounce sweet vermouth    1 dash Angostura bitters

Shake with cracked ice; strain into chilled cocktail glass.

And his most recent film, *Mighty Aphrodite*, is one of his best yet. Its interesting yet simple structure employs common Greek dramatic techniques, but uses them in a way that's so obvious, it inadvertently becomes unique. He even goes so far as to construct a *deus ex machina* in which a helicopter lands in a field and a girl meets the boy of her dreams. Plus, anyone who dreams up F. Murray Abraham as the leader of a chorus deserves some credit for originality!

Allen plays Lenny, a sportswriter, whose wife Amanda (Helena Bonham Carter) wants to adopt a child. He reluctantly agrees and they end up living happily for several years, until the urge to find the child's mother hits Lenny like a burst of subway air. He's obsessing about the kid's parents being convicts, intellectual ciphers, and



stuff like that. Although the chorus leader (Abraham) tries to sway him otherwise, Lenny "accidentally" reads his son's adoption records and discovers the mother's name is Linda Ash (Mira Sorvino in yet another movie). After discovering that she's a prostitute, as

well, he meets her by setting up a date with her—and ends up continually meeting with her and trying to get her to change her profession. As Lenny reaches each decision throughout the process of getting to know Linda, the chorus is there to guide him, acting as his conscience, even getting some good one-liners in here and there. In fact, the chorus's role culminates in a song-and-dance routine that you have to see to believe.

Sorvino skillfully plays up the hooker with a heart of gold, making Linda into an endearing, unapologetic character, but there's no reason to *gush*. Allen plays the same twitchy, neurotic character that he always plays, but that's to be expected. And for once, Helena Bonham Carter dons a New York brogue and a jacket instead of a corset for her part as Lenny's infidel wife. But overall, the chorus is the thread that holds the story together, as it should be.

The laserdisc looks like most of Allen's color films: drab, maybe a little grainy. Even Sorvino's wildly colored outfit don't stand out much. As you might guess, *Mighty Aphrodite* is dialogue-driven, so the surround sound doesn't really come into play, but everyone's voice is relatively easy to understand.

If you haven't seen it, it's definitely worth renting some evening—just make sure no one starts talking about Woody Allen because you'll never get to watch the film in peace. ☺

Here's a quick overview of the scale we use to rate each reviewed item. They may look simple, but these ratings reflect weeks of work in windowless laboratories:



**Buy It** is the rating we'd give to a disc you just can't live without.



**Borrow It** applies to something that you might want to snag from a friend or rent for an evening.



**Skip It** goes to stuff the stores should pay you to take off their hands, but we won't dwell on too much of this.

# With VideoQuest Cables, It's What You See On The Screen That Counts.

Now that "Performance Video" is a hot topic, more people know that every step from the source to the screen is important, and that many of those steps are wires. But, with many logical sounding stories of engineering competence, pretty graphs and even prettier cables and plugs...how can you know whose cables are worth using? The answer has always been to look for yourself...this time "look" really means look!

## Looking Backward or Forward?

In 1976 Polk Audio® woke up the US audio world with a most unusual speaker cable. Since then, many cable suppliers have introduced innovative and often effective ways to reduce the various types of cable-induced distortion. There have been some bad ideas and some just plain "make it big and they will buy" products...but, there has also been real progress.



When a DSS receiver,  
VCR or video camera  
has "S" outputs, Video  
S/Two will outperform  
composite cables.

Unfortunately, the video arena includes companies touting how their cables solve problems that had been solved by others decades ago. After all, a lot of very competent people have been supplying the world of high-frequency communication for a very long time!

These backward-looking companies claim that "characteristic impedance" is important. This is awfully safe ground...everyone has agreed about this since before most of us were born. CATV cable at the hardware store gets this part right, there's no reason to pay a premium for old news. However, there are many other significant, and often more important variables.

It is ironic that some of the same designers who properly argue that "while measurements are important, they don't tell the whole story," are now retreating to the test bench instead of working to provide new solutions.

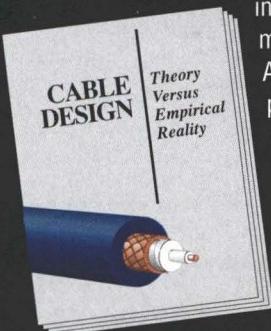
## Composite, RGB, Y/C (S), YIK (DVD), RF — We've Got Them

VideoQuest cables use a combination of the best techniques and materials available from today's high-frequency cable industry, with our own design innovations to "push the envelope."

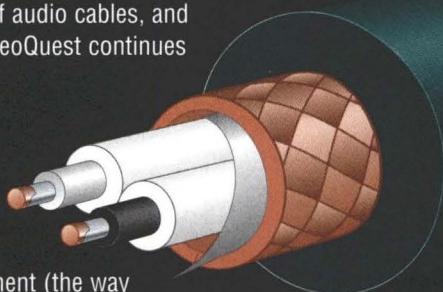
After 18 years of designing distortion mechanisms out of audio cables, and eight years doing the same for video, digital and RF cables, VideoQuest continues to expand the boundaries of this frontier.

## VideoQuest Video Two Pushes the Envelope

- Twin-axial construction includes two identical conductors, ensuring equally low distortion paths for positive and negative...something not possible with conventional coaxial construction.
- Hard Cell Foam (HCF) insulation minimizes dielectric involvement (the way insulation creates distortion by storing and releasing energy). HCF also minimizes damage caused by applying hot plastics to the surface of metal. And, HCF minimizes cold-flow (the deformation of a material under pressure, changing the cable's electrical characteristics and compromising performance).
- Special Silver Plated Long Grain Copper reduces distortion and improves signal flow...which in the world of audio would cause a bright and irritating sound. However, in the high frequency domain, SP-LGC provides a dramatic and cost-effective improvement over even the highest grades of pure copper.



How does a signal  
become distorted?



Video Two's twin-axial construction uses  
special Silver Plated Long Grain Copper  
and Hard Cell Foam dielectric.

## Etc., Etc., Etc.

There are many more technical details and underlying theories as to how to reduce distortion in video cables. For more of this information, please ask for our Cable Design brochure...or better yet, go "see" the cables for yourself.



LIBATIONS

**beginning  
smokers have  
ever seen. It also hap-  
pens to taste great and cost less  
than those overpriced Avos and Davidoffs  
that are all the rage these days. This Hoyo  
has the big, bold taste you can expect from  
Honduran tobacco, with a very smoky, slightly  
bitter flavor lent by the claro wrapper. José  
Gener, the manufacturer, also offers smaller  
sizes, but none intimidate like the big presi-  
dentes. Hoyo claros are hard to find; I get mine  
from JR Cigar in New York at something like  
\$65 a box. JR also puts out a very entertain-  
ing mail-order catalog you can get by calling  
(800) JRCIGAR.**

—Brent Butterworth

### Abbreviated Ode on Pop-Tarts

**Thou still unravish'd Pastry of Fruitiness!**



**Thou foster-child of  
Sweetness and Flaky Crust,  
Breakfast historian, who canst  
thus express  
A tasty tale more filling than  
our rhyme:  
What piping-hot legend haunts  
about thy rectangle  
Of scalding insides, or untoasted bliss,  
In kitchens or the dales of dorm rooms?  
What jelly or jam is this? What sprinkled  
frosting?  
What mad meal? What search for new flavors?  
What tongue will burn? What wild ecstasy?**

—Christy Grosz

### Starbucks

**With the rate this chain of fast-food coffee  
shops is expanding, we almost believe the  
rumors that it's owned by aliens. (Actually,  
every time copy editor Monica James and  
I each drink a vanilla latte in the same  
morning, we end up speaking  
everything in unison for the rest of  
the day. We think it's some sort of  
mind-control thing.) But you can bet  
that there's nothing better than a steamin'  
cup a' joe from Starbucks, or a perfectly iced  
Frappuccino.**

—Christy Grosz



HOT STUFF

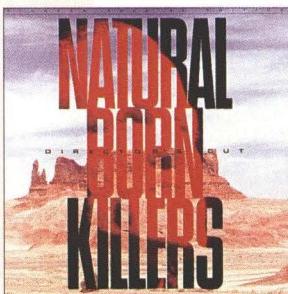
### The Figgs—*Banda Macho* (Capitol)



Anyone who says today's music is as barren as Burt Reynolds's fate must have overlooked The Figgs. Combining a quick pace with a quick wit, this New York band's sophomore release is the toupee that music so desperately needs.

More raw than their major-label debut, *Lo-Fi at Society High*, this new effort showcases their tongue-in-cheek lyric style and banging-guitar sound. The first track, "Blame it All Senseless," could have been taken directly off a Descendents record, while the hit-single-waiting-to-happen, "Girl, Kill Your Boyfriend," is maddeningly catchy. The Figgs also do the hurt-boy routine deftly on "Reject," with a chorus of "Reject. I've got to be one."

If you don't like a particular song, you'll be glad to know that the band takes kind of a Ramones approach to songwriting: Most tunes aren't more than three minutes long. They're also rumored to be a great live band, but, fortunately,



### Natural Born Killers (Director's Cut)—Pioneer



If you think of the role of a special edition as being a way to further enhance the experience of a movie, this one undoubtedly succeeds. Whether you loved Oliver Stone's film or hated it, you will find something of interest in the special-edition director's cut of *Natural Born Killers*. Even if you don't watch the gorgeous, richly colored movie, you should still see the accompanying documentary, which brings a fresh perspective on the reasons behind the making of the film. In fact, it might even make you want to watch *NBK* again.

In addition to restoring all of the cuts Stone made to his masterpiece on the media to get an R rating, this CAV set provides several deleted scenes for your enjoyment, along with an introduction to each from the director. Stone explains why each scene didn't make the final cut and in the process reveals more of the general idea behind the film. (Among the more notable scenes is a monologue from Denis Leary.)

Pioneer's Charles Kiselyak knows how to make an amazing special-edition laserdisc. And *Natural Born Killers* is no exception.

—Christy Grosz



they seem to have a lot of fun recording, too: On the final track, "Every Night," they introduce a short, discordant bridge by saying, "Circus part!"

The Figgs are just a great rock 'n' roll band, and if you haven't heard them, they are most definitely worth more than a casual listen.—Christy Grosz

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But that's just part of the SSD-66 (5.1)'s story. There are a total of 14 *Input Label* settings which can be programmed to automatically engage the right mode, volume level, and additional acoustical settings by tapping just one button.

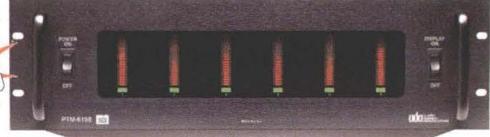


\*When using ADA's RFD-1 AC-3 RF Demodulator

\*\* When using ADA's DTS-1 DTS Decoder

Best of all, in addition to playing Dolby Pro Logic video tapes and TV broadcasts (including DSS), the SSD-66 (5.1) is fully capable of processing both Dolby Digital AC-3 laser discs\* (or DVD discs) or DTS\*\* laser discs and CDs. All of the current formats out there and even the ones yet to come, with the eventual introduction of high definition TV.

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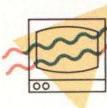


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## Memory Lane

by Dan Yakir

If you'd like to catch up with the great classics of yesteryear, there are no better networks on TV than Turner Classic Movies and American Movie Classics.

Take for example, the utterly enchanting "Miss Marple" whodunits that George Pollock directed with panache from Agatha Christie's novels, featuring the incomparable Margaret Rutherford in the lead. This month TCM is showing all four of them letterboxed (they're otherwise available in a cropped version on tape only). The first feature is *Murder She Said* (1962), in which the lovable, jowly old sleuth sees a strangulation on a passing train



and goes on to find the culprit when the police won't believe her (October 20). In *Murder at the Gallop* (1963), there's nothing this teetotaler extraordinaire won't do to see justice done, in this case among the denizens of an upper-class elite who gather at a country estate (October 27). In *Murder Ahoy* (1964) the endearing old lady unveils corruption and murder aboard a training ship for juvenile delinquents, and displays her fencing skills—even when what's at stake is her own life (October 27). And finally, in *Murder Most Foul* (1965), she puts on her acting beret and joins a theatrical troupe among whose members hides a homicidal maniac (October 20). It's a wonderful series, and the letterboxing helps define the frame in ways that underline the action, even though they weren't shot in a wide screen.

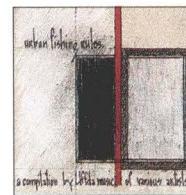
On AMC, catch the affecting political comedy-drama *The Remarkable Andrew* (1942) in which the excellent and very young William Holden plays a bookkeeper framed for embezzlement by local politicians. He recruits the ghosts of the nation's greatest minds to help prove his innocence. It's a fresh, fiery attack on the loss of values, which can be considered a companion piece to Capra's populist fare. Stuart Heisler directed from a script by Dalton Trumbo (*Exodus*). Not available on laserdisc or videotape.

## Various Artists—Urban Fishing Rules (Uff Da Music)



Think of this as a mix put out strictly for the artists' pleasure: a blend of traditional and cutting-edge; an audio journey into the hearts and minds of a collection of Ohio musicians; an (shudder) experimental disc.

All musicians play with skill and passion on their selected tracks.



Here, a dash of noise, a splash of fun, and a lot of jazz are left alone to boil

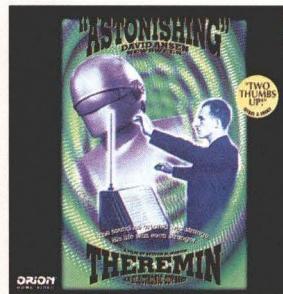
on the stove. The resulting stew is unexpectedly tasty, except for a few overcooked bits. "Panic" is one such bit; the sound is one of self-indulgence or of a musician being locked away with only a guitar, a recorder, and dreams of being a real live rock 'n' roller.

Fortunately, "Wish it Were" and "Insufficient Funds" make up for such lapses. These songs taste like traditional jazz with sexy saxophones and noodling guitars. "Horrible Dream" adds another ingredient—vocals—to make a good piece even better.

It is refreshing to see that CDs are still being produced for the artists, by the artists. Instead of shooting for that number-one spot on Billboard's Top 10, the musical juices are allowed to simmer to create a new sound.

To order, write Uff Da Music, P.O. Box 82119, Columbus, Ohio 43202. Or drop them an e-mail at [uffdamus@aol.com](mailto:uffdamus@aol.com).

—Kate Wightman

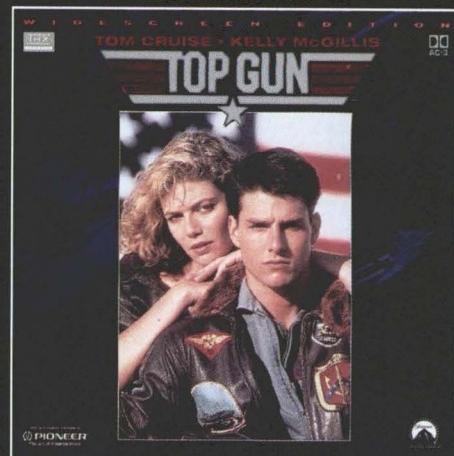
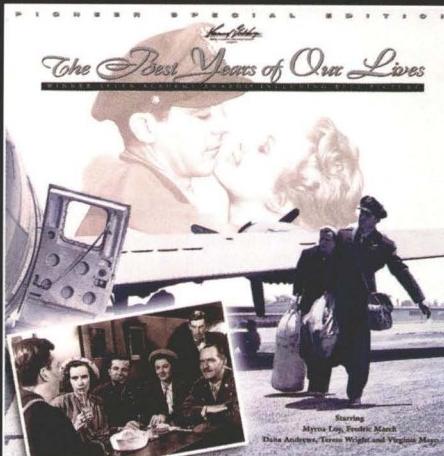
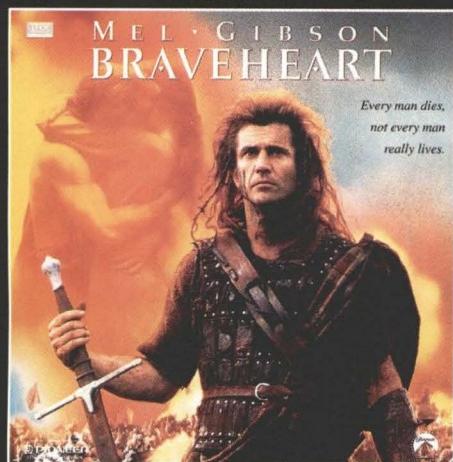


it is kazoo and futuristic zither. At times, the film borders on being an electronics nerdfest, and the buzzing can burn through your home theater, but

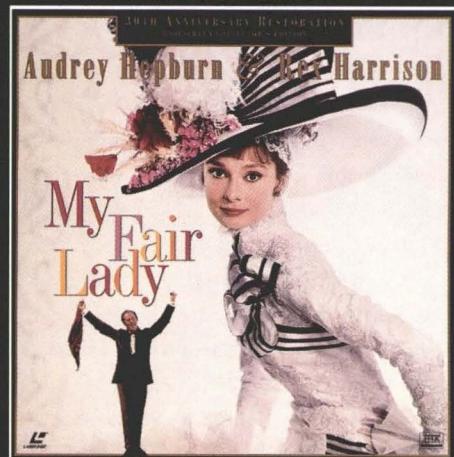
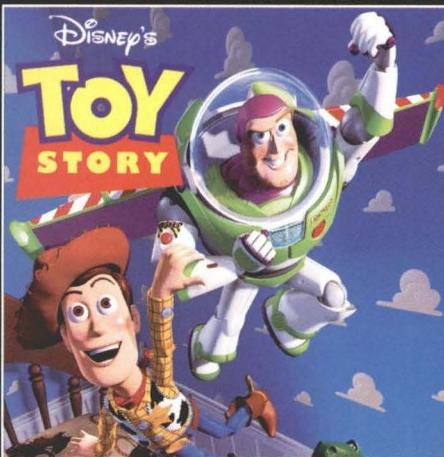
*Theremin* is still an interesting story. "Good Vibrations" and those old horror films will never sound the same again.—Rebecca Kraus

# LASERDISC

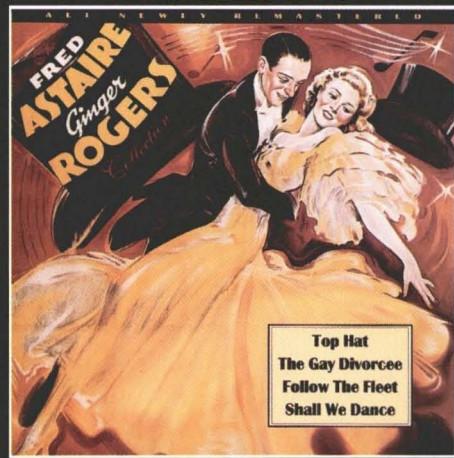
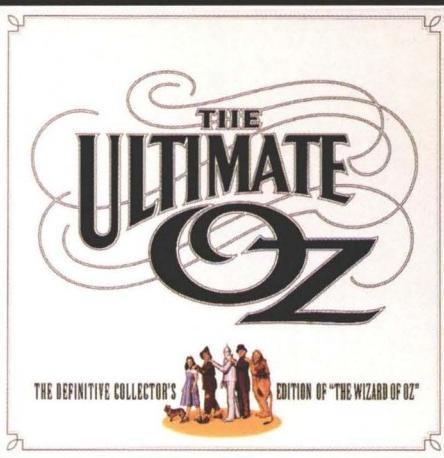
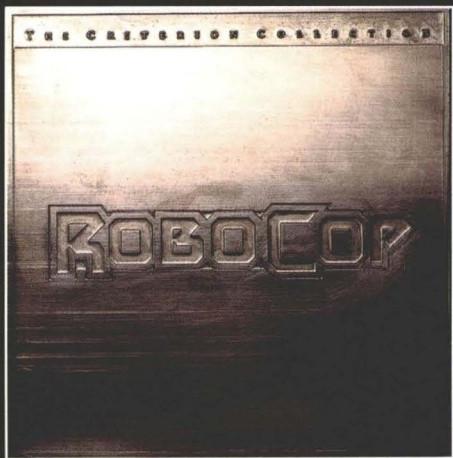
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ENTERTAINMENT



## Tales from the Crypt

by Mel Neuhaus

**Thought I'd recommend a smattering of Halloween-related platters to spin in your dungeon's media room. In an inspired move, MCA/Universal, as part of their ongoing Encore Edition series, has double-billed a pair of Abbott & Costello spook classics, *Hold That Ghost* (1941) and *The Time of Their Lives* (1946). In *Ghost*, Bud and Lou,**



**trapped in an inherited murdered gangster's estate, are privy to a creepy night of sinister happenings. Joining them are Joan Davis (hilarious with Lou in a dance routine),**

**Richard Carlson, Evelyn Ankers, and even Ted Lewis and the Andrews Sisters (singing "Aurora"). Beautifully blending scares and laughs, this top-notch vehicle showcases the boys early in their screen career.**

**Lives, literally a spirited comedy, features Lou and Marjorie Reynolds as two falsely accused traitors executed during the Revolutionary War, Earth-bound until evidence proves them innocent. Enter Bud and his houseguests who have restored a nearly by colonial manor. Unusual as the duo are playing against each other (they were feuding), this charming fantasy underlines what good actors both comics were. It is, in fact, Bud, as a neurotic psychiatrist, who, along with the imaginative sight gags and (then) state-of-the-art effects, steals the show. And the spectacular near-mint black-and-white 35mm transfer should please.**

**MCA/Universal has likewise Encored two Hammer entries, *Kiss of the Vampire* (1962) and *Nightmare* (1964). *Vampire*, one of the studio's finest non Terence Fisher-directed thrillers, chillingly chronicles the fate of turn-of-the-century honeymooners stranded in a small Bavarian village—actually the nesting ground for a vampiric cult. Remarkably adult, this truly eerie outing is gorgeously photographed, and directed with panache by Don Sharp. Best of all, this is**

## La Femme Nikita—Pioneer



Only the culturally lazy would prefer the Americanized version (*Point of No Return*) of this espionage tale. This original French edition is a beautifully shot story which holds up superbly on laser-disc. When we first meet Nikita, she is a wayward junkie whose murderous instincts make her a terror for the authorities. Eventually, however, the government transforms those killer instincts into a weapon they can use to their own benefit: the quintessential femme fatale. Nikita assumes a new name and identity but still possesses the raw and violent tendencies that are so valuable to her secret employers. Things get a little confusing when Nikita, a.k.a. Marie, falls in love and moves in with Marco, a gentle soul who is endlessly curious about his mysterious lover.

With a searing score that effectively fuses Mozart with evocative industrial clanks, the film is an artfully done study of morality, never just black or white. Taking the made-over woman idea to new

heights, *La Femme Nikita* intelligently plays with gender roles and power structures while offering rich characterizations. The best thing on

laserdisc, however, is the direction. With the help of award-winning performances, acclaimed director Luc Besson vividly captures all the shades of Nikita's emotions and her European surroundings.—Rebecca Kraus



## Venice/Venice—Fox Lorber



Separate worlds, separate lives, but play with reality a little and the notion of parallel universes, two parts of the same whole, becomes plausible. Director Henry Jaglom has become something of a maverick for the documentary style of his films, most notably *Eating*, where a single subject is pontificated on by the guests at a birthday party. The



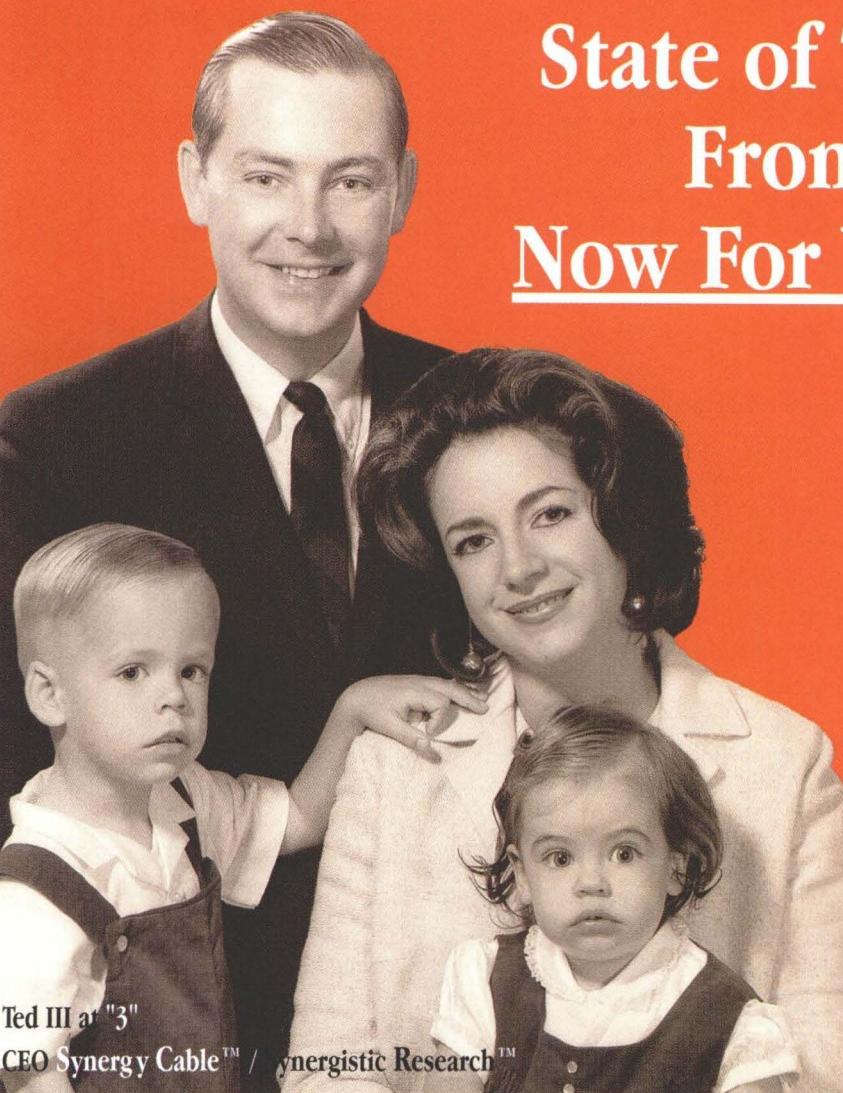
same unscripted aspect that worked in *Eating* is still present in *Venice/Venice*, where Jaglom plays Dean, a director from

Venice, California hyping his latest film at a festival in Venice, Italy. But the difference is that rather than the unmapped, free-form feel of his past films, *Venice/Venice* actually has a story to work with. Lumped in between his usual motley cast of characters, the story becomes disjointed and frustrating because, contrary to the surprising cohesiveness achieved in past films, here the main characters seem to have nothing to do with what's going on with the supporting cast.

In all, an interesting enough premise, but the unfortunate thing about realism is that you run the risk of being boring—and therein lies the root of the problem with *Venice/Venice*.—Monica James

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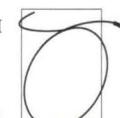
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**the complete theatrical version, not the ridiculously edited TV outrage (re-titled *Kiss of Evil*, as all references to vampires were removed!); the faded Eastman color has been rejuvenated to display a stunning palette of hues and mood tones, and faithfully letterboxed to its 1.66:1 aspect ratio. *Nightmare*, a 2.35:1 HammerScope suspense mystery shot in crisp black and white intrudes upon *Psycho* territory with plenty of patented "Hammer Horror" tossed in for jolt effect. Again, superb transfers and pressings.**

**Columbia/TriStar has also exhumed a few worthy notables. *Fright Night* (1985), Tom Holland's semi-parody of yuppie vampire Chris Sarandon invading suburban America,**

**has finally been released in its proper 2.35:1 Panavision format. Boasting a game cast and mesmerizing Richard Edlund effects, this supernatural roller-coaster ride has**

**been given a great transfer and Sony pressing (although my copy had intermittent snow throughout) with killer digital sound. Three gimmicky inventive William Castle schlockers have also recently arrived on laserdisc: *The Tingler* (1959), a legendary Vincent Price romp with restored color sequence; *13 Ghosts* (1960), a nifty nightmare designed expressly for the kiddie set (with color teaser but monochrome ectoplasm); and *Straight-Jacket* (1964), a gory post-*Baby Jane* item with asylum-released axe murderer Joan Crawford seemingly aching to get back to work. The above trio have all been struck from pristine 35mm black-and-white elements, and feature fine Sony pressings—although one of the scariest things about the Castle works is TriStar's repeated reluctance to letterbox non-Scope titles in their actual dimensions (while acceptable, they should have been matted to 1.85:1).**

**Hey, if there's nothing here to curdle your blood, you can, well...drop dead!**



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**Hey, if there's nothing here to curdle your blood, you can, well...drop dead!**



### **Richard III—Image**



"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse."

Never has that line been said aloud in such utterly strange circumstances as this brilliant adaptation of the Bard's play concerning the ruthlessness of Richard III.

Set in 1930s England at the end of a civil war, it's the story of Richard of Gloucester's rise to power through tyranny, murder, and just about any form of villainy at hand. He becomes king by having everybody between himself and the throne of England murdered, but good triumphs in the end when Richard meets a grisly end.

The shamefully underexposed Ian McKellen, who plays the title role, is largely responsible for this project and should be welcomed open-armed into the upper ranks of the industry. The all-star cast also includes Annette Bening,

Maggie Smith, and Robert Downey Jr.

Framed at an aspect ratio of 2:35:1, the film should be seen on a larger-than-normal screen. The sound,

both AC-3 and standard surround, is breathtaking and the transfer is excellent. This is the sort of film that reveals new information upon repeat viewings, not to mention a great way to brush up on your Shakespeare—forsooth!—*Brian Rabey*

### **Nils Lofgren—Damaged Goods (Pure)**



In rock-music circles, Nils Lofgren is considered a guitar player's, *guitar player*. For the past 10 years, he's been best known as the lead guitarist for Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band. However, keep in mind that this is no ordinary guitar slinger. Nils has also had a solid career as a songwriter and musician for nearly



30 years. He has put out a number of very solid records and his most recent release, *Damaged Goods*, is a gem, exceptionally written, produced, and recorded.

From start to finish, Nils takes us through an eclectic mix of R&B, funky blues, and flat-out rockers with the kind of guitar work that has become his trademark. Standout tracks include "Alone," "Setting Sun," "Heavy Hats," and "Life" co-written with Lou Reed. And don't miss "Trip To Mars" a fun track featuring Nils' nieces, nephew, and friends singing the chorus.

Woven with interesting textures both musically and lyrically, *Damaged Goods* is one of those special recordings that sounds new each time you listen to it. Unfortunately, it was not a major-label release, so if you have trouble finding it, call Anson Smith at (301) 654-4444 to order direct—you'll be glad you did. You can also contact Lofgren on the Internet at: [www.rockhouse.com/nils/](http://www.rockhouse.com/nils/).

—*Patrick Cronin*

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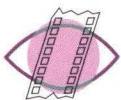
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## Wood Fellas

**Kevin Costner's solid performance in *The Bodyguard* inspired this tome.**

by Michael J. Nelson

Fame is an elusive, ephemeral, and deceitful thing—as Yahoo Serious I'm sure could tell you for

the price of a cup of coffee. Then he'd ask to stay at your place for just a few weeks, just till he got back on his feet. Then he'd want to bum a smoke and maybe borrow a 10 spot 'cause he needs to take the bus uptown for a job interview. The hard-luck Aussie aside, Hollywood's depiction of fame and all its attendant problems—the pressure to stay on top, the lack of privacy, the sky-rocketing cost of trendy Redrum heroin—has been spotty at best. They just never quite get it right. Now I'll grant you that realism and vérité don't necessarily make for good theater (you're not going to sell many CAV laserdiscs of *The Steam Baths of George Kennedy: 1972 to 1981*), but in the wrong hands such outings can look as ridiculous as an off episode of *Saved by the Bell*.

Witness *A Star is Born* with Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson. This movie would ask us to believe that Mr. Kristofferson, who resembles an unkempt Bee Gee, is a rock star more famous than Jesus who got that way by singing the songs of Paul Williams, the tiny, odd little man who used to go on *The Tonight Show* and sing "Just an Old-Fashioned Love Song" in his shrill, warbling brogue. It was a more innocent time. Kristofferson (John Norman

Howard in the film) blows off one of his concerts and goes to a local bar where he catches Babs (Esther Hoffman) singing her soul-less soul to pie-eyed construction workers. If Kristofferson hadn't interrupted her set by brawling with a patron, Barbra might have sent the inebriated toughs into a dervish-like frenzy with her rendition of "The Night They Invented Champagne." For what ropey-muscled steel worker doesn't like to relax with a soggy White Owl, a Mickey's Big Mouth, and Barbra Streisand doing "Hello, Young Lovers" or anything from *Carousel*?

Anyway, they fall in love and the film simply chronicles their tepid romance with the breakneck pacing of a Jim Jarmusch film. The reward comes at the end, after Kristofferson dies, an eventuality that every right-minded viewer will cheer for, and Barbra sings a heartfelt medley of Kristofferson's showy Meat Loafian songs. Backlit by a glowing red light that highlights her tragic perm, Barbra looks a lot like Ronald McDonald. I don't mean this in

a bad way. I happen to think that Mr. McDonald is a handsome man in his own way. Certainly the national Ronald, and even the Ronalds who make personal appearances at store openings in larger markets, are well-groomed and quite striking. It just doesn't suit Barbra, that's all I'm saying.

In the middle of the medley, she makes a stab at rock 'n' roll-type stage shenanigans. She doesn't pull it off, and in fact the odd twitching makes you wonder why an alert stagehand didn't summon the paramedics. It's really weird.

Lawrence Kasdan's magnum opus, *The Bodyguard* is much slicker and has the

advantage of having no scenes of Barbra Streisand frolicking. The leap you must make with this film is that Whitney Houston

is a superstar making barge-loads of money by howling out crappy dance tunes and treacly love ballads....Hey! Wait a minute!

Kevin Costner plays the title role and assumes an even more wooden character than he normally does. It's quite possible that in true Stanislavski fashion, Costner does emotional

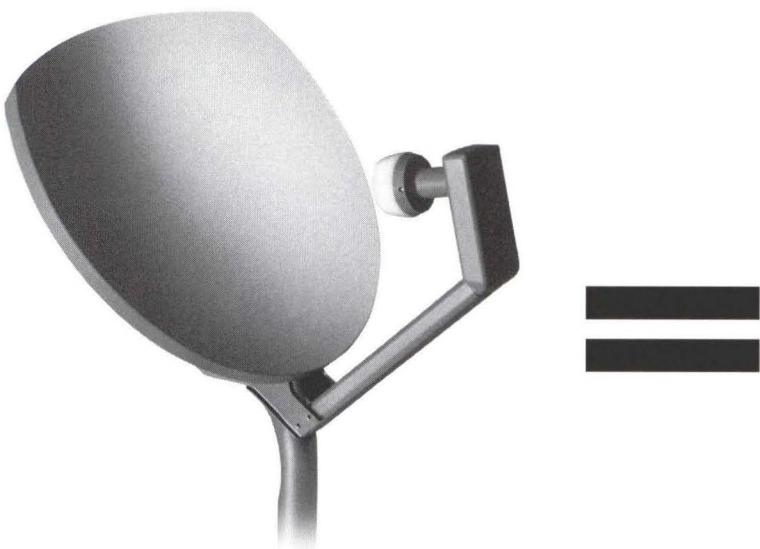
memory and visualization to prepare for his role—he just imagines himself a kiln-dried two-by-four.

Houston, as Rachel Marron, reluctantly hires Costner (Frank Farmer) because a crazy fan has been sending her death threats and doing, well, naughty things on her bed when she wasn't there. Speaking as one who had done this sort of thing really in just a recreational sense, I don't think it's fair to condemn the whole lot of us...well, this is the subject of a whole other column. What happens is they become lovers and end up having to hide out at Costner's dad's place (Ralph Waite, who has been old and grizzled since the age of 10.) Costner is shocked and frightened at this turn of events and you can tell because he has that fixed stare and half-open mouth that he's had for the whole film. He looks like a small-mouthed bass.

Events come to a head at the Oscars where Rachel wins for best actress. Yeah, right. And Marisa Tomei's gonna win an Oscar, too. Tch. I don't want to tell you the ending, but Whitney doesn't die and she ends up with Costner and then she sings "Eye eeee eye eee eye will always lu-uh youooooooooooooo" for about 78 hours straight.

Next month, Debbie Gibson and Donna Summer in *All About Eve*.





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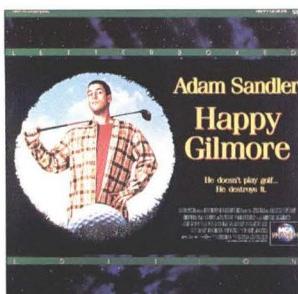


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**Happy Gilmore—MCA/  
Universal**

Lightning doesn't strike twice when it comes to golf movies. *Caddyshack* set the standard in 1980, but consequent attempts at humor on the links have fallen well above par. The latest, *Happy Gilmore*, tries heartily to capture the spirit of the Bill Murray/Chevy Chase classic, but Adam Sandler's just no match for his *Saturday Night Live* fore-runners when it comes to physical comedy.

The story—what little there is—concerns an aspiring hockey



player whose slap shot happens to translate into a 400-yard golf drive. Since his hockey career hit a dead end, Gilmore's only chance to save his

grandmother's house from the IRS is to go on the professional golf tour. This comedy begins and ends with Gilmore's hot temper, better suited to the ice than the gentlemanly world of pro golf.

MCA's disc transfer, letterboxed at 1.85:1, is sharp overall, and the outdoor scenes are well-drenched with color. The Dolby Surround soundtrack is hardly put to use, save for some particularly lifelike echoes in an ice rink, though.

For mindless comedy that will keep youngsters and Sandler fans out of trouble for a while, *Happy Gilmore* is a harmless choice. Anyone else looking for a few laughs on the green should watch *Caddyshack* again.

—*Gary Frisch*

**Iron Butterfly—In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida (Mobile Fidelity)**

Iron Butterfly's 17:05 opus was a perfect example on how not to get ya up on the dance floor in the late '60s. Rolling along for 140 weeks on the Billboard chart when it was released in 1968, it peaked at Number 4. A sub three-minute edit charted at Number 30 and stayed on the Hot 100 for more than four months, eventually selling 4 million copies. Of course, today the mere mention of the song brings about groans of disgust and disdain, all of which indicate it must have been a bomb—yeah, right! In fact, we've had a love/hate relationship with the song for more than 25 years: We all love it, we're just afraid to admit it!

What most critics have been afraid to admit is that the song has a strong hook, similar to Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love," which got under your skin and ended up being one of those tunes you hummed and could never quite shake.

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album yet. They've also taken advantage of the extra space on a CD:

For those who can't get enough, there's a live version of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," and for those who want a lot less, there's the three-minute version.—*Brian Rabey*

**Rumble in the Bronx—Image**

His publicists say Jackie Chan is one of the world's leading action stars. Whether true or not, he's no doubt the world's bravest. Chan's stock-in-trade is performing all of his own stunts, a gimmick that

makes *Rumble in the Bronx*, his first U.S. film, an unusual viewing experience.

On one plane, *Rumble* works as a rapid-fire, martial arts film with

likeable characters. The fact that all the non-Americans' lines (including Chan's) are dubbed like a 1980s Godzilla film only adds to the charm.

On another level, Chan's bravado can't help but elicit astonishment. Chan doesn't merely fight his own battles, he leaps from one rooftop to another, springs from a truck as it hurtles off a parking deck, and water-skis in sneakers. How little thought we give to these feats during a Schwarzenegger film. Here, a second viewing is required to appreciate both the peril and choreography.

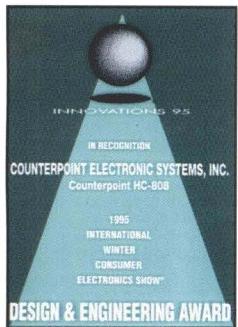
Image's 2.35:1 transfer is slightly marred by a few artifacts on side one, but it is otherwise clean and bright. The surround soundtrack emits just the right amount of big-city ambience and crunching bones.

Jackie Chan represents a breath of fresh air for jaded action fans. And you can't help but admire a movie that wrecks a Lamborghini just for the fun of it.—*Gary Frisch*

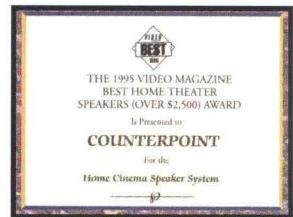
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## Dead Can Dance

The newly released laserdisc, *Re-Animator*, takes the classic Frankenstein story to new heights—or depths.

by Dan Yakir

The horror genre got a much-needed shot in the arm when Stuart Gordon made his directorial debut with 1985's *Re-Animator*, an outrageously innovative take on the Frankenstein myth. Shot for a mere \$1 million, this stylish macabre tale became an instant cult classic—and it's now available for the first time on a letterboxed laserdisc from Elite Entertainment.

The story is about a medical student named Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs) who invents a serum that can revive the dead—except the fluorescent-green liquid turns the "newborns" into demented, murderous zombies. He soon gets a top medical student, Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott), involved in his experiments despite the objections of his girlfriend, Meg Haisey (Barbara Crampton), the dean's daughter who has heard disturbing rumors about the man. Both West and Cain become pariahs and their experiments are denounced as insane by the dean. But the two keep at it, and one after the other the dean and his chief supporter, brain surgeon Dr. Carl Hill (David Gale), happen to stumble on an experiment and end up as zombies. Hill actually gets decapitated and his head and body try to coordinate a rescue mission to revive him using West's research notes. In the explosive finale, Hill—rather, his severed head—gets to make love to the unconscious Meg, having lobotomized her father. There's a spectacular zombie revolt at the end survived only by Cain—and he faces the dilemma of his life pondering the lifeless body of Meg.



TED ARK

Despite the evolution of special effects (and its impact on the usual splatter films), this mad-scientist melodrama remains as explicitly gory and visually shocking today as it was a decade ago, when it was first released. But Stuart Gordon displays so much humor and intelligence, and so much technical expertise that the movie soon transcends the goal of "outschlocking schlock" and becomes a meditation about the meaning of life and creation.

Yes, you get exposed brains and smashed torsos galore, but unlike most low-rent exploitation fare, you aren't called upon to relish the gore so much as to appreciate its humorous take on the genre. It's a ghoulish joke—funny as it is terrifying—and it manages to preserve the original spirit of H.P. Lovecraft, on several of whose stories it is based.

Gordon founded and ran the Organic Theater in Chicago before he started making films, and you can sense his avant garde sensibility here, too. This is a film way ahead of its time and it's not for those who can't see beyond the gruesomeness—and into its soul.

"When you go back and forth between laughter and terror," says Gordon, "when you don't know exactly how to relate to something, whether to scream or to laugh, you end up doing both." In his theater production of *E.R.*, a stab-wound victim staggered onstage bleeding profusely while an untrained doctor tried to get him to sit in a wheelchair. "The whole thing turned from a horror scene into slapstick," recalls Gordon. "I like to use that in my films as well."

But if this combined approach is to work, the director claims it must be enhanced by authenticity. "I visited a

couple of morgues," he remembers, "and realized the way they're portrayed in movies is totally unrealistic. Dead people don't look right in the movies. Death is no less individual than life—each person looks different, depending on the way he died and how long he's been dead."



His preoccupation with death has helped the director demystify it and somehow alleviate the fear most people have of facing it. "The scariest movie I've ever seen is *Psycho*," he offers. "What's wonderful about it is that it breaks all the rules. When you watch a movie and you realize that the filmmaker isn't going to play fair, you get really terrified." But while Hitchcock withholds the gore, Gordon doesn't shy away from it. Still, he says, "I'm beginning to come around to the idea of holding back, because I think it's scarier. In *Re-Animator*, if you show too much, it loses its impact. The audience's imagination is always going to be better than anything you could show them. It's the build-up that's everything—the anticipation. Actually, when the MPAA saw my movie *From Beyond*, they demanded that I cut parts of several scenes—instead of a long look at something it would be a glimpse—and they discovered that the movie became scarier!"

This laserdisc is an amazingly good transfer from a new, 35mm low-contrast print struck from the original negative—the colors are realistic and the beauty of the darker scenes is never marred by their being over- or under-lit. This is the only version in existence that's true to the original film—the video and TV versions were cut by the initial distributor for rating purposes. This beautifully packaged deluxe edition also offers running commentary by Gordon, producer Brian Yuzna, and the cast, plus trailers and deleted scenes. But, again, it's not for the faint of heart.

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## Reversal of Fortune

The victimizer and victim exchange roles in Luis Buñuel's *Tristana*, starring the late Fernando Rey.

by Dan Yakir

Luis Buñuel's *Tristana* (1970) is a masterfully told morality tale that decries political and sexual oppression as well as hypocrisy in 1920s Spain. It's the poignant story of Don Lope (Fernando Rey), an old aristocrat who takes home an orphan named Tristana (Catherine Deneuve) as a favor to her deceased mother who was one of his mistresses. Lope is an



eccentric—he barely survives on his inherited income but would rather die than work; he sees government and church as exploitative; he's an avid follower of "free love," and rejects marriage as a vile prison. But man's honor code says nothing of taking advantage of his young protégé, whom he alternately considers a daughter and a wife, and forbids her to even leave the house by herself.

*Tristana*, aided by Lope's servant Saturna (Lola Gaos), sneaks out when he's away—first to breathe fresh air, later to cavort with a handsome painter (Franco Nero) whom she meets and falls for. Although she leaves town with her lover, she returns three years later gravely ill and Don Lope takes her in triumphantly. He doesn't even mind that she has one leg amputated—

perversely, he finds it erotic. But the new Tristana and her old master undergo a role reversal: The victim becomes victimizer and responds to the old man's growing tenderness toward her with all the harshness she can muster. She agrees to marry him but denies him conjugal rights; when Don Lope becomes ill, she never calls a doctor, content to watch him die. Lope has been stripped of all his ideals—he marries in church, befriends silly priests who only crave his inheritance. Tristana's revenge fits well within the circular structure of the movie: It veers between sex and death, leaving little place for love.

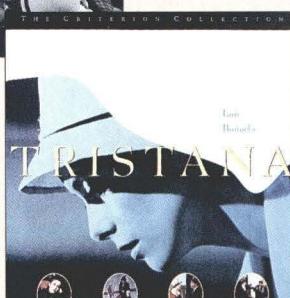
This is a pretty straightforward fable, with few of Buñuel's usual surrealistic touches, and the acting is uniformly excellent. Deneuve gives a restrained performance in which repression and

hatred slowly build up to a horribly matter-of-fact climax. And then there's Fernando Rey, one of Spain's greatest actors, who acted all over the world and who died at age 76 in 1994. Rey is nothing less than miraculous in his performance as a

sexually obsessed, hypocritical "liberal" aristocrat. A Buñuel favorite, Rey considered *Tristana* the peak of his career—and his favorite role.

"I made close to 200 films," recalled Rey, "and when you get a script that surprises you, it's a shock. What caught me off guard about Buñuel was his sense of the absurd, and at the same time he was so logical and strange and humorous."

"I don't prepare a lot for a role—I don't go to church when I have to play a cardinal or to the hospital when I play a doctor—I'd rather watch the faces of people walking down the street. But I went to the studio



for a day's work and Don Lope just came to me, took over without me feeling it. It was a huge surprise when we watched the dailies, especially for Buñuel. He said, 'It's fantastic, what are you doing?' and I said I didn't know.

"It's my most memorable film because Buñuel was sad when he made it—it was a kind of will. It was sad and tender, a parting statement, although it wasn't his last film. We were

both old anarchists, surrealists, against society, against the law—and Lope himself was like that in the beginning. But when he becomes an old man, he becomes afraid of the civil guard, he marries in church—he becomes a kind of idiot. Buñuel himself said to me, 'What I'm afraid of is that in the end of my life I'll be an old man, an idiot.' He never became that, but he worried about it.

"We first met in 1952, in Cannes, where he had a film called *El: This Strange Passion* and I went to see the film knowing nothing about him. I didn't understand anything and I didn't like it, either. For me, Buñuel was just a weird person. I once went to his house in Mexico for lunch—I was shooting a film there—and he stopped some of the guests from telling dirty jokes because his 'babies' were there. The babies were his fully grown sons Rafael and Juan Luis. He was such a puritan!

"He affected my life more as a person than as a director," concluded Rey. "He was my best friend, my god, my father, my brother. What a clever, funny, tender man he was!"

*Tristana* is available for the first time on laserdisc in a perfect transfer from Voyager. It's presented in its original aspect ratio (1:66) with subtitles that capture the flavor of the original Spanish. The color quality is impeccable, preserving the brownish color scheme that gives the film much of its bleak edge. Not to be missed!

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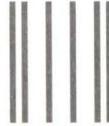
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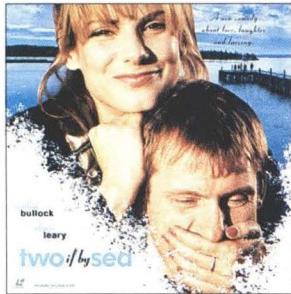
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**Two If By Sea—Warner Bros.**

Roz (Sandra Bullock), a cashier, and Frank (Denis Leary), a petty thief, are having relationship problems. What complicates matters is that they're also on the lam because Frank has just stolen a \$4 million painting.



The two quarreling love birds lay low in a modest mansion in a tiny seaside village—the owners are away—and become acquainted with the next-door neighbor who just happens to collect paintings.

What Frank and Roz don't realize is they've left a pretty obvious trail behind them and eventually a couple of FBI agents, one played against type by Yaphet Kotto, catch up to them. But not before the painting is stolen away from the couple and Frank makes the connection between the theft and a certain millionaire next door.

*Two If By Sea* is a quaint little comedy that won't do any good—or harm—to any of its stars' careers and will probably be one of those films that you knew for certain wasn't up for any awards. Still, it's funny enough to be worth a rent for the evening. The film transfer, framed at 1:85:1, is excellent and the surround sound is aggressive.—*Brian Rabey*

**Blue in the Face—Image**

The pace of Wayne Wang's sequel to *Smoke*, *Blue in the Face*, tends to languish, much like a Sunday afternoon in summer. Picture a lawn chair, an icy lemonade, and nothing but time to kill.

Picking up where *Smoke* left off, the film still focuses on the central character Auggie and the cigar shop he tends. Much like real life, the plot of Auggie's life isn't linear; personalities appear, linger, then fade into the background. There's a smattering of action here and there, but the rest is mostly an ode to the wonders of New York City. It's meant to be absorbed lazily.

As a side note, the film is vacuum-packed with cameo appearances from Mira Sorvino (does she have some kind of contract to be in *every* film released from now on?), Roseanne, Lou Reed, and Michael J. Fox to name a few.

The laserdisc, unfortunately, suffers from a couple of flaws. There's an instance where the

soundtrack volume drops a notch then comes back up. The picture overall is a little soft and grainy, and the colors are not always uniform, but it's passable.

When you put on this disc, remember that on a Sunday afternoon, you're not sitting around waiting for something to happen, you're just sitting around.

—*Christy Grosz*

**Haden/Jones—  
Steal Away (Verve)**

Subtitled *Spirituals, Hymns and Folk Songs*, this tradition-steeped duet album should touch every jazz and blues listener.

Hank Jones (b. 1918 and older brother of trumpeter Thad and drummer Elvin) is credited with founding the Detroit school of jazz piano (Tommy Flanagan, etc.). His economical and subtle inlay work makes him an ideal accompanist (for Ella Fitzgerald in the late

'40s, and many others). The last decades have thankfully brought increased solo opportunities. Charlie Haden may have come to prominence as a Free Jazz bassist, but he obviously feels this music deeply. (He organized this session after hearing Jones's rendition of "It's Me, O Lord [Standin' in the Need of Prayer].")

The contents are precisely what one might have chosen, except for Haden's own "Spiritual" and the folk song "L'Amour de Moy" (in deference to the Montreal recording venue?). Picking favorites is invidious—taste and conviction shine from every bar—but the closing hymn medley, "Abide With Me" to "Amazing Grace," caps a performance of generous impulse and moving affirmation. In any event, this would have been a record of indispensable source materials; Jones and Haden offer a prime experience. Authoritative notes and appealingly warm sound.—*Walt Mundkowsky*



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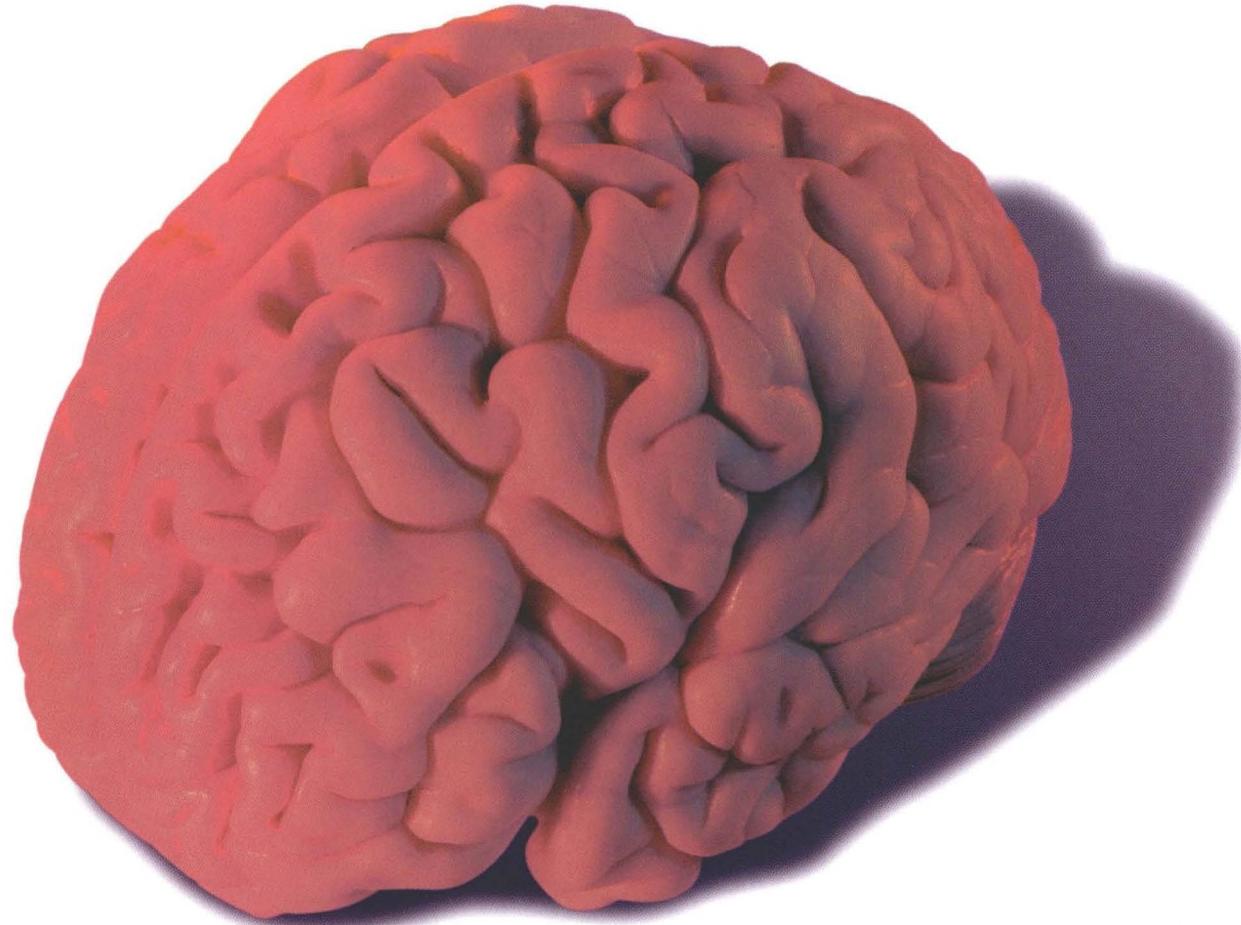
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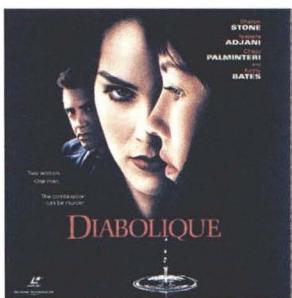


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**Diabolique—Warner Bros.**

Although non-fatal head impalements always add a touch of class to a film, Chazz Palminteri's rake-to-the-head experience at the end of *Diabolique* just wasn't enough to keep things moving. In the film,



Palminteri plays a headmaster at a boys' school who carries himself more like the Godfather than a principal. His cowering wife with a heart condition, Isabel Adjani, and his trampy mistress with a *horrible* wardrobe, Sharon Stone, plot to kill him just because he's so darn mean. (Seems reasonable enough; he gives me the heebie-jeebies.) But when his body disappears from whence they dumped it, they begin to think he's not so dead. Somewhere along the line, Kathy Bates shows up as a detective with male-pattern baldness and one breast. (They never really explain why she has to have one breast; I'm just giving the facts here.) Turns out Chazz and Sharon planned the murder to freak out Isabel, hoping she'd have a heart attack. Then Sharon has second thoughts when Isabel really does start gasping for air, so the women have to kill him for real. Kevin Spacey, I mean Kathy Bates, witnesses the murder and punches Isabel in the face so she can claim self-defense.

There, now you don't have to sit through it like I did.

—Christy Grosz

**Russian String Quartet  
(Collins Classics)**

The Duke Quartet is a young U.K. ensemble best known for its work on the recent Pretenders album *The Isle of View* (ably covered by Rebecca Kraus in the March '96 HT). Its latest CD blazes no trails, but playing this keen-edged and poised is always welcome.

The often-encountered 8th Quartet of Shostakovich (1960) can still cut to the bone. Its bare, emaciated textures and autobiographical references bespeak a private tragedy. Alfred Schnittke's Quartet No. 2 (1980) laments the auto-accident death of talented film director Larissa Shepitko in even more agonizing terms. The waves of percussive string sonorities form a sustained cry of rage, with no sense of consolation or closure. (His insertion of ancient Russian Orthodox chant brings stillness, but not peace.) Next to these emotional powerhouses, Tchaikovsky's Op. 11 Quartet happily seems a puff pastry.

One hardly lacks alternatives for the Shostakovich. The swagger of the ad hoc Lockenhaus performance of the Schnittke remains singular, but the Duke might



offer a more revealing view of the score itself. The group stops at the

water's edge in the Tchaikovsky, declining to wallow in the famous Andante. Lucid studio sound, a bit dry, suits these interpretations.

—Walt Mundkowsky

**Hume—The Spirit of Gambo (Glossa)**

Captain Tobias Hume (1569–1645) was one of the most colorful characters of Shakespeare's day. A mercenary officer who fought in Sweden and Russia, he published two extensive collections (1605, solo pieces; 1607, consort music and songs) that highlight his chosen instrument, the viol. (Their blunt prefaces are a hoot—"To prayse Musicke, were to say, the Sunne is bright.") His various schemes for advancement never

bore fruit, and he died broke and possibly delusional.

Hume was untutored, so his music lacks the decorative counterpoint of contemporary lute works. But he was remarkably perceptive about the strengths of his fiddle. Even the ambitious items ("Capitaine Humes Pavan") maintain interest, through varied bowing and piquant harmonies. The more intimate entries ("Deth," "Life," "Loves Pastime") tap that unique Elizabethan strain of sweet sadness.

Jordi Savall has pretty much cornered the Hume market, but this new Glossa title (a Spanish label unknown to me) is a superb alternative. Paolo Pandolfo—a rising period-instrument star—understands the style, and enjoys the advantage of selecting from both volumes (Savall's two CDs stick with one or the other). From the beautifully designed booklet to the sumptuous sound, this is a deluxe product.

—Walt Mundkowsky

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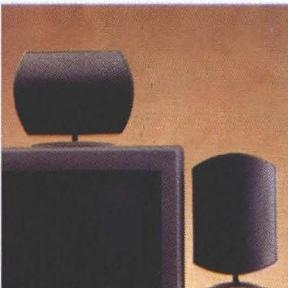
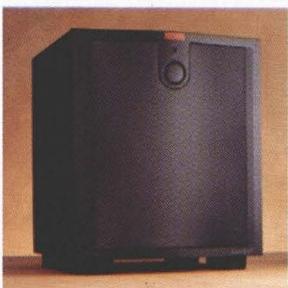
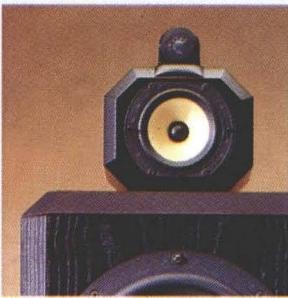
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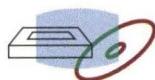
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# Cinema Obscura

This month's whimsical period pieces view history not (like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus) as a nightmare to be escaped, but as a series of inexplicable marvels.

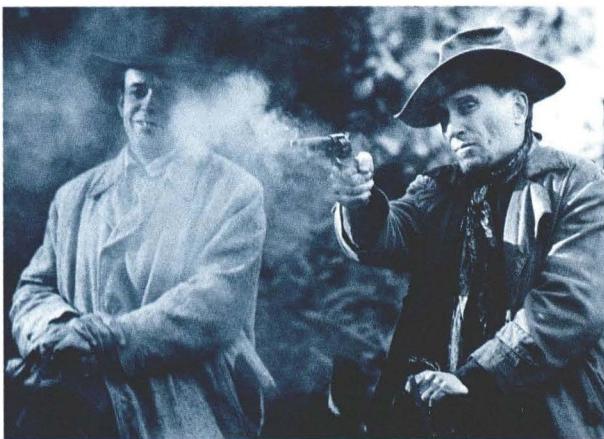
by Walt Mundkowsky

## The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid

Directed by Philip Kaufman

*The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (1972) is an odd and affecting little Western that picks through the wreckage left by *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971). Filled with craggy characters and off-course incidents, its peculiarities still surprise and delight.

Covering the second half of 1876, the movie chronicles the final sortie of the James-Younger



From left: Luke Askew, Cliff Robertson, and R.G. Armstrong in *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (above right). Robert Duvall as Jesse James (above and right).

gang. ("In all the world," the breathless narrator boasts, "they were the greatest outlaws.") The group's kingpins have little in common. Jesse James is a wild-eyed Yankee-hating mystic, while Cole Younger



tive calliope that intrigues him. Thus repaired, the device will alert the town to the crime in progress.

The ricochet plot is joined to a hilarious debunking spirit. One first sees Jesse and Frank James in an outhouse, employing wanted posters as toilet paper. The defenders of order fare no better;



Detective Pinkerton is a clumsy clown. The satiric high point is a primitive baseball game where the escalating illegality echoes that of the football contest in *M\*A\*S\*H*. "It's our national sport," a Minnesotan points out. Cole corrects him: "Our national sport, gentlemen, is shooting, and always will be."

During a visit to the whorehouse, Cole explains his tag line: "A wonderment's a thing of wonder, something to behold, something rare and good—could be a beautiful picture or a pretty song or a feeling." Random decisions here take on fateful consequences. Jesse saves an old lady's home by paying her mortgage; he

will later kill her for her clothes. The ingenious front sight Cole attaches to the rifle of a fumbling stranger will result in the death of an outlaw friend. And most baffling of all: While en route to hold up the bank, Cole stops to insert a hand-carved piece into an inopera-

Writer-director Philip Kaufman's execution might lack refinement, but one searches in vain among his later projects for the same raucous energy. The tacky brownish colors practically stink; so does Dave Grusin's tarnished folk-instrument score. It keeps finding cheap but effective solutions—like the growling solo spinet that accompanies the start of the bank heist.

The leads hold this haphazard structure together, Cliff Robertson nails Cole's scientific interests,

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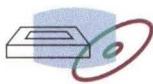
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CINEMA OBSCURA

Dorotha Segda as  
the seductive Dora  
in *My Twentieth  
Century*.



while Robert Duvall's phenomenally twitchy Jesse James is both alarming and riotous. Luke Askew has a ball with Jim Younger, his upper

lip shot away, and Peckinpah fixture R.G. Armstrong and Matt Clark (as Bob, "the youngest Younger") also stand out. (I should note that Walter Hill retold this story, in more conventional fashion, in *The Long Riders* [1980].)

## My Twentieth Century

Directed by Ildikó Enyedi

Cole Younger's description of a wonderment would appeal to Hungarian director Ildikó Enyedi. *My Twentieth Century* (1989), her debut feature, exhibits a similarly eccentric and personal understanding of key events.

Menlo Park, New Jersey—1880. Thomas Alva Edison presents a nighttime outdoor demonstration of the electric light's potential. On that same evening in Budapest, a woman gives birth to twins, Lili and Dora. After being separated as children, the girls wind up on the same Orient Express train for the final night of 1899. In first class is Dora, now an elegant and available free spirit. Riding unnoticed in coach, Lili is a stern anarchist con-

spirator who escorts carrier pigeons for the cause. Each of them in turn seduces a lonely, serious-minded bachelor who doesn't realize that they are different people. Enyedi brings everyone together near the end in a hall of mirrors—plus a donkey. The film closes with a gorgeous and stately tracking shot down a tree-lined waterway. One is headed...where?

Enyedi works to preserve the jaunty, fanciful air of a fable, but her subtexts aren't trivial. Dora's conniving, larcenous, sexually adventurous ways might actually be more subversive of the status quo than those of her radical sister. Lili displays admirable enterprise when showing literature to factory workers, but her



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bomb-throwing exploit shrivels when she comes face to face with the intended target. The sexual encounters are arresting, primarily because they are paced in a manner that precludes simple comedy. The man spies Lili in a library and seizes the initiative (whatever happens is perfunctory). He meets Dora on a cruise ship and takes her for Lili (suddenly eager and athletic). Later he bumps into Lili—literally—and brings her to his dingy flat (she's skittish at best). His puzzlement appears more cosmic than momentary.

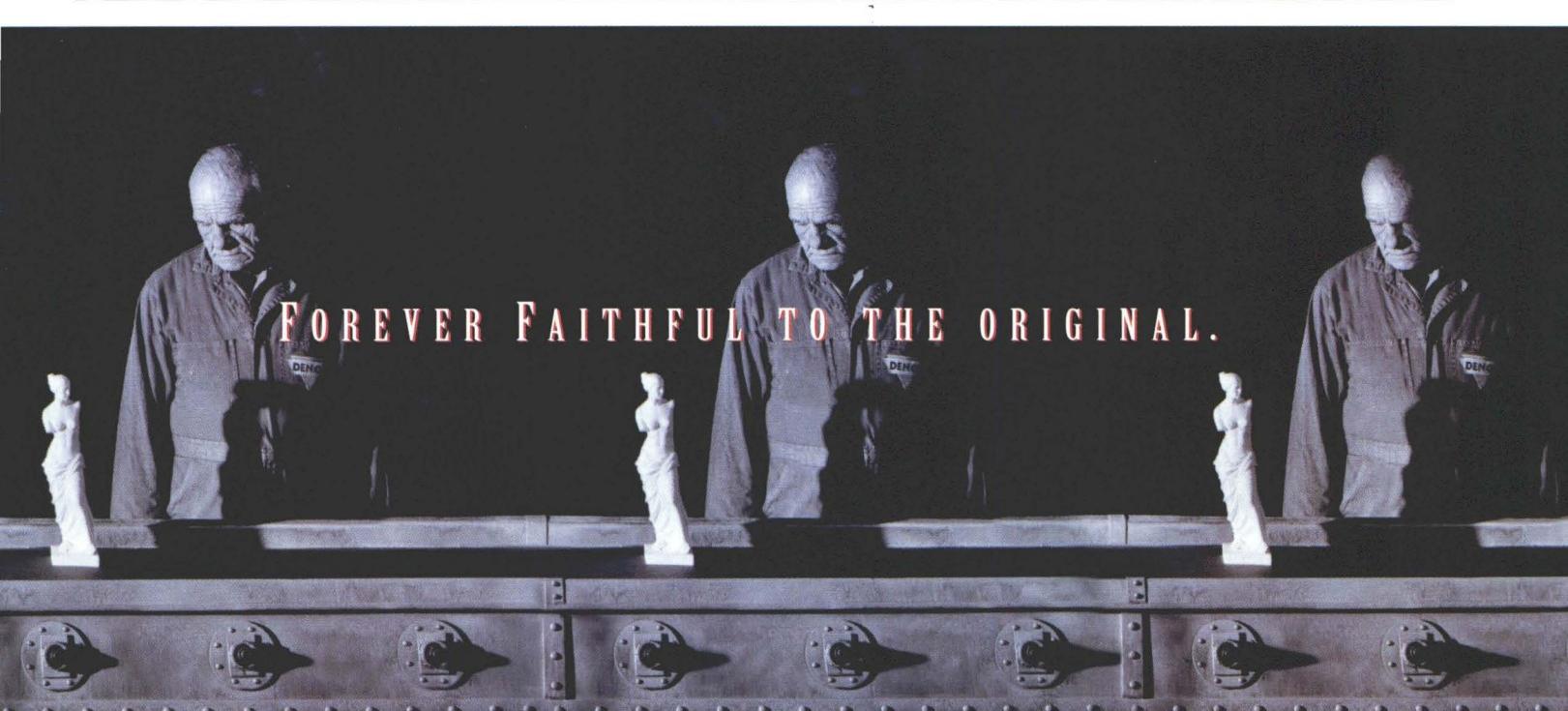
The movie's free-association method can encompass all sorts of material. (An exception is the longwinded misogynist's lecture Lili attends.) Enyedi makes fre-

quent and telling use of animals, perhaps because they fit right into her distinctive mode—simultaneously poignant and silly. The sole attendant at the birth of the twins is a cat. A dog prepared for a research venture escapes from the lab to investigate the world. At the zoo, Lili and her suitor are interrupted by a caged chimp's tale about the pitfalls of curiosity. A carrier pigeon drops in on Edison's announcement of a worldwide telegraph system. The bachelor's readings from a zoology text (*The Law of Mutual Assistance in Nature*) are every bit as applicable to the world of humans.

Among that era's most far-reaching inventions is the cinema itself. Tibor Mate's splendid camerawork imitates the plush blacks, silvery whites, Academy screen

ratio, and iris-out/iris-in transitions of long ago. The direction contains glancing allusions to D.W. Griffith, Renoir, Welles, and numerous others, as well as more general bows regarding shot selection and changes of setting. Anything Enyedi borrows, however, receives a dark or playful tweak.

Dorotha Segda, a diminutive blonde, is equally attuned to the sparkling Dora and the resolute Lili. Oleg Jankowski greets a Tesla experiment and an aggravating female with the same hooded expression. And Peter Andorai brings a specifically Hungarian (and very funny) melancholy to Edison.



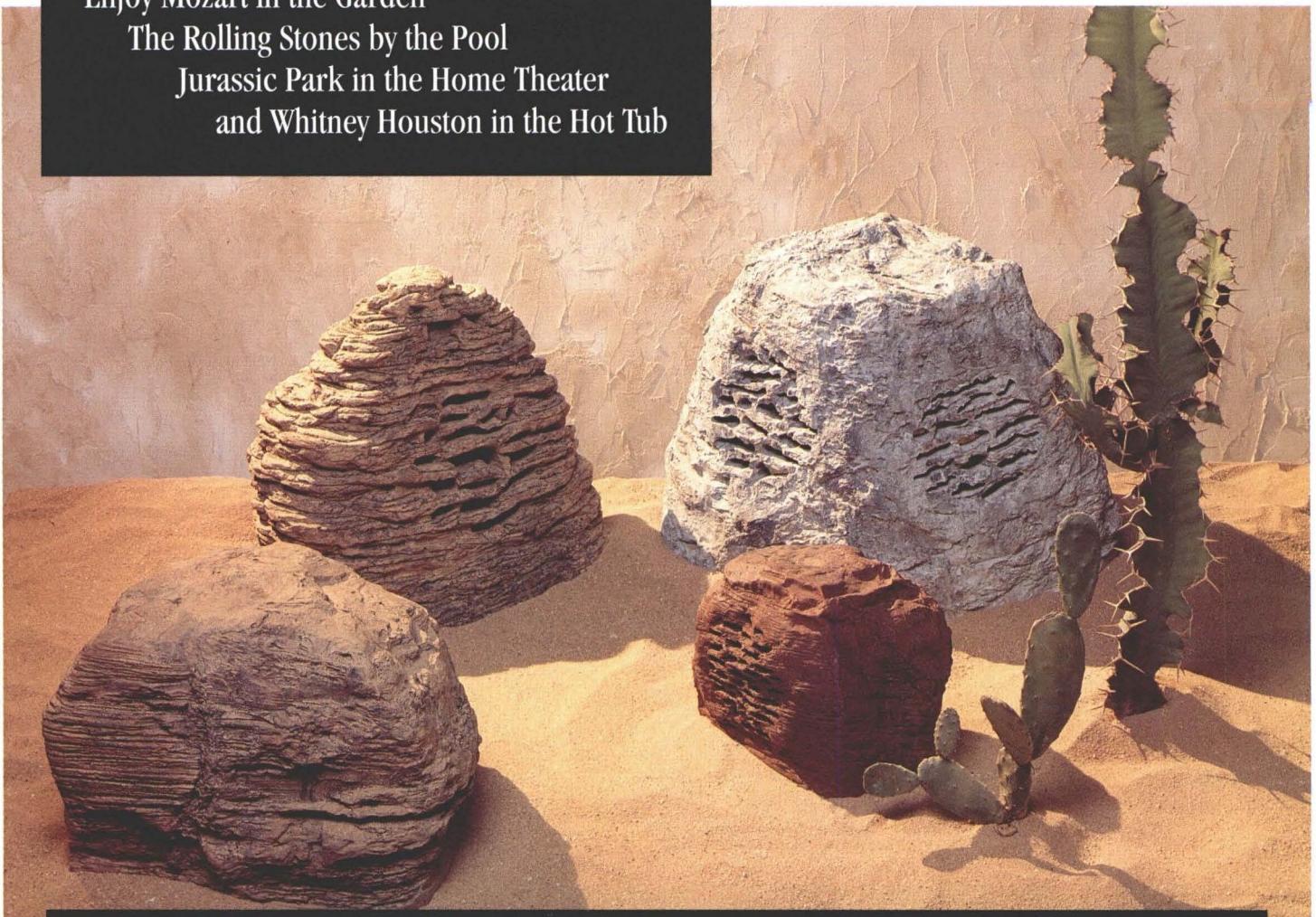
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Soundolier/Atlas Soundolier	SND
Soundstream Technologies	SOS
Stewart Filmscreen	STE
Stereostone	STS
Studio Tech	STU
Sunfire Corp.	SUN
Synergistic Research	SYN
Tara Labs	TAR
Theta	THE
Thiel Loudspeakers	THI
Toshiba	TOS
Triad	TRI
Velodyne Acoustics, Inc.	VEL
Vidikron	VID
Wire World	WWR
XLO Electric Co.	XLO
Yamaha	YAM
Zenith Electronics Corp.	ZEN

**ALABAMA****Audio Video Specialist**

111 Broadway  
Birmingham, AL 35209  
(205) 871-2219  
ATL, AUD, CAR, CRE, DWI, ESO, JAM, MLN, MER, NEA, NIL, PAX, PIO, PLD, PSB, RAN, SHA, SHF, SNY, SON, SOS, STE, YAM

**Carmichael Electronics**

192 S. Foster Street  
Dothan, AL 36301  
(334) 793-7066  
BOS, DAL, INF, AR, NIL, ONK, PHI, RCA, SON, VID

**Custom Audio Creations**

2750 Mauvilia Dr.  
Mobile, AL 36606  
(334) 479-8361  
AUD, B&W, MAR, M&K, NIL, ONK, PDM, RSS, STE, TOS

**Cohen's Electronics**

2515 Eastern Bypass  
Montgomery, AL 36117  
(334) 277-8890  
CHP, DEF, M&K, MSU, OMN, PDM, POL, SHA, SON, SNY, YAM

**ALASKA****Pyramid Audio**

2440 Seward Hwy. #C  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 272-9111  
ATL, ACT, AUD, BOS, CAR, DEF, INF, KEN, MAR, MCI, MBQ, MON, MTX, NIL, OMN, ONK, PAX, PDM, SHA, SON, SNY, STU, TOS, VEL

**Shimek's Audio**

530 E. Benson  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 276-2525  
ANG, B&W, DEN, JVC, KLI, M&K, MSU, NIL, YAM

**ARIZONA****Hi Fi Sales**

810 West Main  
Mesa, AZ 85201  
(602) 969-1338  
AAL, ACT, CHP, DIA, INF, KIM, M&K, MSU, MON, NIL, OMN, ONK, PDM, PIO, POL, RSS, RUN, SNY, STE, THI, YAM

**BMW Satellite**

12602 N. Black Cyn. Hwy.  
Phoenix, AZ 85029  
(602) 996-7928  
ADA, AMX, AUD, BOS, CRE, DCD, FAR, HAR, HIT, INF, OMN, PAX, PIO, RCA, SAM, SHA, SHF, SND, SYN, STE, TOS, XLO

**Buzz Jensen's**

Sound Advice  
2230 E. Indian School Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
(602) 955-8800  
AAL, ATL, B&W, BRY, DEN, HIT, JVC, KLI, MLN, MSU, OMN, PHI, PIO, PAX, PRS, RCA, RFL, RSS, RUN, SHA, SON, STS, VEL, YAM

**Jerry's Audio Video**

600 E. Camelback Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85012  
(602) 263-9410  
BOS, DEF, LOV, MCI, MBQ, MON, MSU, OMN, PAN, PHA, PHI, PIO, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SND, VID, YAM

**Sounds Like Music**

2734 W. Bell Rd., Ste. 1306  
Phoenix, AZ 85023  
(602) 993-3351  
AUD, ARE, ENE, MAD, MAR, MER, MIR, OMN, RSS, SHA, TAR, THI, VID

**Esoteric Audio**

4120 N. Marshall Way, Ste. 1  
Scottsdale, AZ 85251  
(602) 946-8128  
DAL, KIM, KIN, LOV, MAX, NEA, NIL, ONK, RUN, VAN, WWR, XLO

**Southwest Audio/Video**

23425 North Scottsdale Rd.  
Scottsdale, AZ 85255  
(602) 502-5982

AVA, CAR, CHP,ENE, HIT, JAM, KEN, MAR, MER, PAX, PET, PIO, PRS, RFL, RUN, STS, TOS

**Incredible Universe**

2300 W. Baseline Rd.  
Tempe, AZ 85283  
(602) 431-5800

ATL, BOS, CAR, CWV, DEN, HAR, JVC, KEN, MAX, MON, PAN, PHI, PIO, PLD, PPC, PRS, RFL, RCA, SHA, SHR, SNY, ZEN

**Jerry's Audio Video**

201 S. Wilmet  
Tucson, AZ 85711  
(602) 747-7267

BOS, DEF, LOV, MCI, MBQ, MON, MSU, OMN, PAN, PHA, PHI, PIO, RCA, SHA, SNY, SND, YAM

**ARKANSAS****Custom Audio & Video**

10014 Rodney Parham Rd.  
Little Rock, AR 72227  
(501) 227-9077

ACT, AUD, B&W, CHP, DEF, DEN, KLI, MAR, MCI, MSU, OMN, PAX, PHA, PDM, SHA, SHF, STE, VID, YAM

**N. CALIFORNIA****Future Sound**

851 California Dr.  
Burlingame, CA 94010  
(415) 342-1476

ATL, BOS, B&W, DAL, DWI, HIT, JAM, KRE, LOV, MON, NIL, OMN, ONK, PHI, PIO, PLD, RAN, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, TER, TOS, VEL, XLO

**Golden Pacific Systems**

2350 S. Bascom Ave.  
Campbell, CA 95008  
(408) 371-9177

CRE, DAL, HAR, INF, MSU, MON, NIL, PHI, PIO, SHA, SON, SOS, STE, TOS, VEL, YAM

**David Vincent Design**

26384 Carmel Rancho Lane  
Carmel, CA 93923  
(408) 626-1865

ATL, CHP, CRE, JAM, M&K, MLN, NIL, PAX, SHA, STE, SNY, VID, XLO

**Integrated System**

Designs  
21580 Stevens Creek Blvd.,  
Ste. 108  
Cupertino, CA 95014

(408) 973-8789  
ANG, AUD, B&W, CRE, EXT, HVC, MON, NEA, NHT, PIO, SON, SOS, STE, TRI, VEL, VID, YAM

**Sound Advice**

303 5th St.  
Eureka, CA 95501  
(707) 442-4462

AAL, ACT, CPT, DCD, DEN, INF, JVC, KEN, KLI, MON, MSU, NEA, NIL, OMN, PAX, PDM, PHI, RFL, RUN, SHF, SHR, STE, STU, TAR, XLO

**The A/V Room**

710-F Mowry Ave.  
Fremont, CA 94536  
(510) 713-1241

AVA, ACT, ACR, B&W, CAR, HIT, MON, NEA, NIL, OMN, PIO, RCA, RSS, SHA, SSI, SOS, VEL

**Accurate Audio Video**

2152 Lake Tahoe Blvd.  
S. Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

(916) 541-1666  
ACT, BOS, BRY, CAT, CRE, DAL, DCD, DEF, DEN, FAR, KLI, MBQ, MCI, MSU, MON, NIL, OMN, PAN, PAX, RAN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VID

**Access to Music**

2207 Larkspur Landing Cir.

Larkspur, CA 94939

(415) 461-1568  
AUD, B&W, DEF, MAD, MSU, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PIO, RSS, SHA, SON, SNY, SPI, STE, VAN, VID, YAM

**Sound Planning**

208 Vintage Way

Novato, CA 94945

(415) 898-0255  
ATL, CAR, CHP, JBL, MAR, MCI, MIR, MSU, ONK, PAX, PIO, STE, VID, YAM

**Pro Home Systems**

383 40th St.

Oakland, CA 94609

(510) 653-4300  
ACT, AUD, B&W, CRE, ENE, KLI, MAD, MAR, MON, NIL, OMN, ONK, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, RSS, SHA, SON, STE, SUN, TRI, VID, VWR

**Audible Difference**

805 El Camino Real

Palo Alto, CA 94301

(415) 328-1081  
AUD, B&W, BRY, ESO, JBL, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, OMN, PAX, PHA, RAN, SHF, SNY, SON, STE, SUN, THE, THI, VEL, WWR

**Integrated System****Designs**

4465 Granite Drive

Rocklin, CA 95677

(916) 624-7658  
ANG, AUD, B&W, CRE, EXT, HVC, MON, NEA, NHT, PIO, SON, SOS, STE, TRI, VEL, VID, YAM

**Incredible Universe**

4100 Northgate Blvd.

Sacramento, CA 95834

(916) 567-4800  
ATL, CAR, CWV, DEN, HAR, JVC, KEN, MAX, MON, PAN, PHI, PIO, PLD, PPC, RFL, RCA, SHA, SNR, YAM, ZEN

**Paradyne Audio/Video**

1732 Fulton Ave.

Sacramento, CA 95825

(916) 481-3900  
AUD, DEF, DWI, HAL, LOV, MAR, MLN, MER, MON, PAN, PAX, PDM, PAX, PDM, PHA, PIO, PLD, RAN, SON, STE, VEL, VID, YAM

**Hermay's Audio****Video Design**

386 El Camino Real

San Carlos, CA 94070

(415) 592-9480  
AVA, AMX, ACT, CRE, CAR, DWI, HAR, HIT, IMA, JAM, JVC, KIM, MAR, MCI, NIL, NHT, OMN, PAX, PDM, PET, PIO, PRS, RFL, RAN, SHA, SON, SND, SOS, STE, TOS, TRI, VEL, VID, XLO

**Soundscape**

314 Mendocino Ave.

Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707) 526-7555  
AUD, B&W, MCI, MIR, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, SON, VEL, VID, XLO

**Laser Connection**

245-C Mt. Herman Rd.

Scotts Valley, CA 95066

(408) 438-5112  
ATL, AAL, DAL, INF, KEN, LOV, M&K, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PIO, PLD, SHF, SON, STE, TOS, TRI, VEL, VID, XLO

**Audio/Video Interiors****Unlimited**

1375-A2 Mono Way

Sonora, CA 95370

(209) 536-1500

HIT, INF, KEN, MAR, MON, MTX,

NIL, ONK, PET, PIO, RFL, SAM, SHA, SON, SSI, ZEN

**Harmony Audio Video**

333 West Portal Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94127

(415) 661-2525  
AUD, B&W, DEN, M&K, MON, PAX, PAN, RSS, VID, YAM

**Performance Audio**

2847 California St.

San Francisco, CA 94115

(415) 441-6470  
ATL, AUD, B&W, CHP, DEF, DEN, HAL, JAM, M&K, MON, MSU, NHT, NIL, OMN, PAN, PAX, PIO, RSS, SHA, SON, SNY, SPI, STE, VAN, VID, YAM

**San Francisco****Stereo Plus**

2201 Market St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 861-1044  
AAC, B&W, DAL, ESO, KIN, KRE, MAR, MER, MIR, MSU, NIL, PHA, SHF, STE, STS, SUN, TAR, VEL, VID

**Bay Area Audio**

1362 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd.

San Jose, CA 95129

(408) 255-0735  
AUD, B&W, DEF, DWI, HAR, KIM, LOV, MLN, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PHA, RAN, SHF, STE, SUN, TER, VID

**Century Stereo**

620 S. Bascom Ave.

San Jose, CA 95128

(408) 998-7474  
ACT, B&W, CAR, MAR, MCI, OMN, PAX, PDM, PHA, PIO, RSS, RUN, SON, STE, SUN, TER

**Water Street Stereo**

726 Water St.

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(408) 427-1604  
ACT, AUD, DEN, INF, JVC, KIM, KLI, KIN, MON, NIL, NHT, SOS, STE, VEL, VID

**Catania Sound**

589 Mendocino Ave.

Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707) 526-7555  
AUD, B&W, MCI, MIR, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PHA, RAN, SHF, STE, SUN, VEL, VID

**Hometech**

2450 Bluebell Dr.

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

(707) 524-1510  
AMX, CHP, DAL, DWI, EXT, HAR, HIT, JBL, KEN, MON, NEA, NHT, OMN, PAX, PIO, PLD, RAN, SON, STE, VEL, VID

**Soundscape**

314 Mendocino Ave.

Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707) 578-HIFI  
AAC, ACT, B&W, CAR, CHP, DEN, ENE, GRA, KIM, LOV, MSU, MON, NIL, ONK, SHE, TAR, VAN, XLO

**Laser Connection**

245-C Mt. Herman Rd.

Scotts Valley, CA 95066

(408) 438-5112  
ATL, AAL, DAL, INF, KEN, LOV, M&K, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PIO, PLD, SHF, SON, STE, TOS, TRI, VEL, VID

**Audio/Video Interiors****Unlimited**

1375-A2 Mono Way

Sonora, CA 95370

(209) 536-1500  
HIT, INF, KEN, MAR, MON, MTX, NIL, ONK, PET, PIO, RFL, SAM, SHA, SON, SSI, ZEN

**Stereo Unlimited**

1545 Locust St.

Walnut Creek, CA 94596

(510) 932-5835  
ANG, AUD, CWD, MAR, MLN, NEA, OMN, PIO, PLD, RSS, SUN, XLO

**S. CALIFORNIA****Multi-Television Services, Inc.**

5120 E. La Palma Ave., Ste. 102

Anaheim Hills, CA 92807

(714) 693-0755  
AMX, CHP, DAL, DCD, HIT, JVC, MAX, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, OMN, PIO, PLD, RCA, RUN, SHF, SON, STE, STS, TOS, VEL, YAM

**Custom Hi Fi & Video**

145 N. Fairway Ave.

Goleta, CA 93117

(805) 683-2162  
AAC, CHP, DAL, HIT, LOV, MON, M&K, NAD, NIL, OMN, PIO, PLD, RAR, SHF, SON, STE, TOS, VEL

**Audio Visions, Inc.**

15375 Barranca Pkwy., Ste. B107

Irvine, CA 92718

(714) 753-0503  
ADA, AMX, B&W, CAR, CIT, CRE, DAL, EXT, HAR, HIT, INF, MCI, M&K, MSU, MON, NEA, NHT, NIL, OMN, PIO, PAN, PAX, RAN, SHF, SON, SNY, SOS, STE, TOS, YAM

**Home Automator**

1060 Aviation Blvd.

Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

(310) 379-2222  
AV, CRE, JAM, JBL, MAR, MSU, MON, PAN, PIO, RUN, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, YAM

**Audio Concepts**

6236 E. Pacific Coast Hwy.

Long Beach, CA 90803

(310) 597-5450  
ACT, AAL, B&W, DEF, KLI, LOV, MAR, MCI, MON, NIL, NHT, SOS, STE, VEL, VID

**Audio Command Systems, Inc.**

114 S. Robertson Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90048

(310) 273-3352  
AMX, B&W, CHP, CRE, DAL, EXT, JBL, MLN, MSU, NIL, ONK, PAN, PIO, PRS, RAN, SHF, SON, SNY, STE, TOS, VEL, YAM

**Robert's Home Audio**

1611 S. La Cienega Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90035

(310) 276-3955  
AES, AMX, B&W, CHP, CRE, DCD, HIT, INF, KEN, MON, NIL, OMN, PIO, PAN, PAX, RAN, SHF, SON, SNY, STE, TOS, VEL, YAM

**Supero Home Theater**

221 N. Atlantic Blvd.

Monterey Park, CA 91754

(818) 289-9999  
B&W, IMA, JBL, KEN, MCI, MIR, MON



**SoundTrack**

1370 S. Colorado Blvd.  
Denver, CO 80222  
(303) 759-5401  
AAL, B&O, INF, IMA, JBL, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MSU, MON, MTX, ONK,  
PAX, PAN, PIO, PET, PLD, POL,  
PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SOS, TOS,  
YAM, ZEN

**SoundTrack**

4606 S. Mason St.  
Fort Collins, CO 80526  
(303) 223-3666  
AAL, B&O, INF, IMA, JBL, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MSU, MON, MTX, ONK,  
PAX, PAN, PIO, PET, PLD, POL,  
PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SOS, TOS,  
YAM, ZEN

**Residential Systems**

400 Corporate Circle, Unit O  
Golden, CO 80401  
(303) 277-9983  
ADA, AMX, CRE, DWI, JAM, JBL,  
KEN, MCI, MON, MSU, NHT, NIL,  
PAX, PIO, RAN, RCA, RUN, SON,  
STE, TOS, TRI

**SoundTrack**

8262 S. University Ave.  
Ste. 125, Bldg. O  
Highlands Ranch, CO 80122  
(303) 779-5003  
AAL, B&O, INF, IMA, JBL, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MSU, MON, MTX, ONK,  
PAX, PAN, PIO, PET, PLD, POL,  
PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SOS, TOS,  
YAM, ZEN

**SoundTrack**

9350 W. Cross Dr.  
Littleton, CO 80123  
(303) 979-8900  
AAL, B&O, INF, IMA, JBL, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MSU, MON, MTX, ONK,  
PAX, PAN, PIO, PET, PLD, POL,  
PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SOS, TOS,  
YAM, ZEN

**Incredible Universe**

8585 S. Yosemite  
Littleton, CO 80124  
(303) 705-5800  
ATL, B&O, CAR, CWV, DEN, HAR,  
JVC, KEN, MAX, MON, PAN, PHI,  
PIO, PLD, PPC, PRS, RCA, RFL,  
SHA, SHR, SNY, YAM, ZEN

**SoundTrack**

930 E. 104th Ave.  
Thornton, CO 80233  
(303) 450-6677  
AAL, B&O, INF, IMA, JBL, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MSU, MON, MTX, ONK,  
PAX, PAN, PIO, PET, PLD, POL,  
PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, SOS, TOS,  
YAM, ZEN

**CONNECTICUT****Tweeter Etc.**

195 W. Main St.  
Avon, CT 06001  
(203) 677-6060  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON,  
MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD,  
POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS,  
TRI, VID, YAM

**Carston Stereo**

146 Old Brookfield Rd.  
Danbury, CT 06811  
(203) 744-6421  
AUD, B&W, DAL, DEF, DEN, IMA,  
JVC, MAR, MBO, MON, NIL, PAX,  
PIO, PLD, POL, RSS, SHA, SHF,  
VEL, VID

**Audio Video Enhancement, LTD**

10 Tranquility Dr.  
Easton, CT 06611  
(203) 268-4400  
AES, ACT, BRY, CRE, DEN, DWI,  
JAM, MAX, MAR, MSU, NIL, OMN,  
PAX, PHI, PIO, PRC, PRS, RAN,  
RCA, SHA, SON, SOS, STS, TRI,  
VEL, VID

**Performance Imaging, LLC**

115 E. Putnam  
Greenwich, CT 06830  
(203) 862-9600  
ACT, AMX, BRY, B&W, CHP, CRE,  
DAL, JBL, KLI, MON, NIL, PAX,  
RAN, RUN, SON, SNY, STE, VEL

**Stereo Shop**

505 Farmington Ave.  
Hartford, CT 06105  
(203) 523-7250  
ACT, AUD, B&W, CHP, CRE, KIM,  
KEN, MCI, MSU, NHT, NIL, OMN, ONK,  
PAX, PIO, PLD, SHA, SON, STE,  
STS, THE, VID, XLO, YAM

**Opus Audio/Video**

Interior, Inc.  
85 Willow St.  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 498-0407  
AMX, BRY, CHP, DEN, ESO, MAD,  
MSU, MON, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD,  
POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS,  
TRI, VID, YAM

**Robert's Audio Video**

90 Bank Street  
New London, CT 06320  
(800) 606-HIFI  
ATL, ACT, AAL, AUD, CHP, DEF,  
HIT, INF, MCI, NIL, ONK, PAX,  
PHA, PIO, PLD, SHA, SNY, STS,  
TOS, XLO

**Tweeter Etc.**

2661 Berlin Turnpike, Unit 1  
Newington, CT 06111  
(203) 665-0606  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON,  
MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD,  
POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS,  
TRI, VID, YAM

**Better Sound**

2882 North Federal Hwy  
Boca Raton, FL 33487  
(407) 997-0550

AMX, B&W, BRY, CAR, CRE, DAL,  
DEN, EXT, JBL, MLN, MSU, NIL,  
ONK, PAN, PIO, PRS, RAN, RUN,  
SHA, SON, SNY, SND, STE, VEL

ATL, AAL, BRY, CHI, DAL, HAR,  
MER, M&K, MON, NEA, WWR

AES, ACT, BRY, CRE, DEF, ESO, HIT,  
MCI, MBO, MSU, MON, NIL, ONK,  
PET, PIO, PLD, POL, SHA, SHF,  
SUN, VEL, YAM

**Design Installations**

4 New Canaan Ave.  
Norwalk, CT 06851  
(203) 847-2777  
AMX, CHP, CRE, DAL, INF, JAM,  
JVC, MCI, MSU, MON, NEA, NIL,  
PAX, PRS, RCA, RAN, SND, SON,  
STE, VEL, VID, XLO, YAM

**Tweeter Etc.**

Crystal Mall  
Waterford, CT 06385  
(203) 447-8355  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON,  
MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD,  
POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS,  
TRI, VID, YAM

**DELAWARE****Overture**

2423 Concord Pike, Rt. 202  
Wilmington, DE 19803  
(302) 478-6050

ANG, AUD, CIT, DAL, DEN, DWI,  
ENE, EXT, JAM, KIN, MAD, MAR,  
MSU, NIL, PIO, RAN, RUN, SNY,  
STE, THE, THI, TRI, XLO

**FLORIDA****Audio Command Systems, Inc.**

6590 West Rodgers Circle  
Boca Raton, FL 33487  
(407) 997-0550

AMX, B&W, BRY, CAR, CRE, DAL,  
DEN, EXT, JBL, MLN, MSU, NIL,  
ONK, PAN, PIO, PRS, RAN, RUN,  
SHA, SON, SNY, SND, STE, VEL

ATL, AAL, BRY, CHI, DAL, HAR,  
MER, M&K, MON, NEA, WWR

AES, ACT, BRY, CRE, DEF, ESO, HIT,  
MCI, MBO, MSU, MON, NIL, ONK,  
PET, PIO, PLD, POL, SHA, SHF,  
SUN, VEL, YAM

**Front Row Center**

5030 Champion Blvd., Ste. D8  
Boca Raton, FL 33496  
(407) 241-1767  
B&W, MON, PIO, PLD, THI, VEL,  
XLO

**Sound Advice**

351 N.E. 51st St.

Boca Raton, FL 33431  
(407) 994-4434

B&O, B&W, DCD, DEN, INF, JVC,  
KEN, KLI, MLN, MBO, MON, MSU,  
MTX, NHT, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO,  
PET, PLD, POL, RCA, RFL, RUN,  
SHA, SNY, SOS, STE, STU, TOS,  
VEL, YAM

**Stereo Shoppe**

279 N. Federal Hwy.  
Boca Raton, FL 33432  
(407) 391-0552

HIT, KIM, MAR, MIR, NIL, SUN

**Vern's Electronics**

6120 N. Federal Hwy.  
Boca Raton, FL 33487  
(407) 997-9444

AMX, BRY, CHP, DWI, JBL, JVC,  
M&K, MAD, MAR, MSU, NEA, NIL,  
PAN, PAX, PHA, PHI, PIO, PET,  
RUN, SNY, SON, STE, STS, TOS

**Cooper For Stereo**

5251 110th Ave. N., Ste. 101  
Clearwater, FL 34620  
(813) 572-0052

DEF, MAR, MCI, M&K, NEA, NIL,  
OMN, PAX, PIO, PHA, RUN, SHF,  
SON, SNY, STE, TER

**Rising Sounds**

28901 U.S. Hwy. 19 N.  
Clearwater, FL 34621  
(813) 787-1133

AES, AMX, CAR, CHP, JVC, MCI,  
M&K, NIL, PAX, PDM, PIO, PET,  
SUN, STE, VAN

**Sounds Terrific**

18867 U.S. Highway 19 N.  
Clearwater, FL 34624  
(813) 538-2266  
ACT, AUD, CAR, CIT, CTP, DEN,  
HIT, JVC, MIR, MSU, MON, NIL,  
ONK, PAX, PIO, POL, RSS, SNY,  
SOS, VEL, VID

**Sound Advice**

1222 S. Dixie Hwy.  
Coral Gables, FL 33146  
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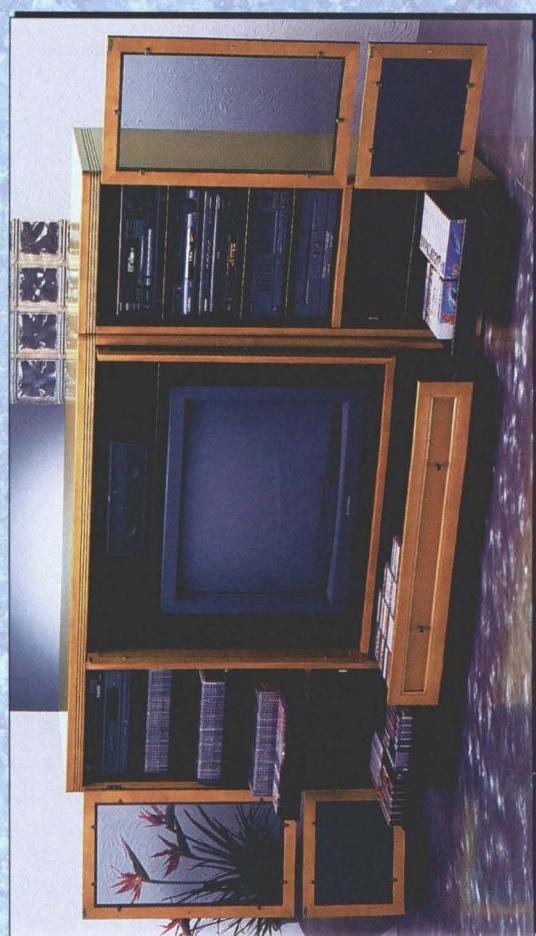
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(515) 244-4024  
CIT, DWI, HAR, MSU, RCA, SON, SNY, ZEN

## Custom Audio/Video

85 N. Center Point Rd.  
Hiawatha, IA 52233  
(319) 393-3212  
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## Audio Odyssey of Iowa City

409 Kirkwood Ave.  
Iowa City, IA 52240  
(319) 338-9505  
B&W, DEN, MON, PAX, PAN, SNY, THI, VEL

## The Audio Room, Ltd.

1426 Twixt Town Rd.  
Marion, IA 52302  
(319) 373-1727  
AUD, B&W, BRY, DEN, ESO, KLI, MCI, MIR, MSU, PAX, PHA, SHA, VEL, WWR, YAM

## KANSAS

**Keif's Gramophone**  
2429 Iowa St.  
Lawrence, KS 66046  
(913) 842-1811  
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## Audio Mart

10330 Stateline  
Leawood, KS 66206  
(913) 648-1333  
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## Audioport

7329 W. 97th St.  
Overland Park, KS 66212  
(913) 341-2222  
AUD, BRY, B&W, CHP, HAR, LOV, MAD, MLN, MER, RSS, RUN, SON, STE, THE, THI, VEL, YAM

## KENTUCKY

**Custom Audio Video, Inc.**  
2802 New Hartford Rd.  
Owensboro, KY 42303  
(502) 685-5250

AMX, B&W, CAR, CHP, CRE, DAL, HAR, INF, JAM, JBL, JVC, KEN, KLI, MON, OMN, PAN, PAX, PIO, PET, PLD, POL, RAN, SAM, SHA, SND, SOS, SNY, STE, TOS, TRI, VEL, YAM

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**Mel-O-Sounds**  
3120 Severn Ave.  
Metairie, LA 70002  
(504) 455-0804  
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## Audio Video Connection

210 Kansas Lane  
Monroe, LA 71203  
(318) 345-2365

ATL, CHP, DAL, JAM, MON, MSU, NIL, PAX, PRS, PIO, RCA, SNY, STE, TRI, YAM

## GCS of Louisiana

99 Plum Street  
West Monroe, LA 71291  
(318) 325-9940  
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## MAINE

**Harbor Audio Video**  
87 Elm St.  
Camden, ME 04843  
(207) 236-9596

B&W, JAM, JVC, MSU, NEA, NIL, PHA, RCA, SNY, VEL, VID, YAM

## Custom Electronics, Inc.

164 Market & Middle  
Portland, ME 04101  
(207) 874-1988  
ADA, AUD, BRY, CHP, CRE, DEN, FAR, HAR, M&K, MSU, NEA, PDL, RAN, STE, TRI, VID

## New England Hi-Fi

424 Payne  
Scarborough, ME 04074  
(207) 883-4173  
AUD, DEN, HAR, KLI, MCI, NEA, NIL, OMN, ONK, PAX, PDM, SON, SNY, STE, VEL, VIDE

## MARYLAND

**American Automation & Communications, Inc.**  
2661 Riva Road, Ste. 310  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 737-0800

ACT, AES, CAR, CHP, MTR, NIL, PAX, PET, PIO, RUN, SNY, STE, TOS, VID, YAM

## Audio Buys, Inc.

150 N. Jennifer Rd.  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 266-7791

AES, ATL, ACT, AUD, CAR, DEN, HIT, JAM, JBL, KLI, MBO, MER, MSU, NIL, ONK, PIO, POL, PAX, RCA, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VID

## Audio Buys, Inc.

3360 Crain Highway  
Waldorf, MD 20603  
(301) 870-5333

AES, ATL, ACT, AUD, CAR, DEN, HIT, JAM, JBL, KLI, MBO, MER, MSU, NIL, ONK, PIO, POL, PAX, RCA, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VID

## Hi Tech Electronics

1942 West St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
(410) 266-0818  
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## Rickey's TV and Audio

81 C Forest Plaza  
Annapolis, MD 21403  
(410) 224-4313  
ACR, CAR, HAR, HIT, JVC, MAR, M&K, MSU, MON, NIL, NHT, PAX, PAN, PIO, RCA, SNY, VID

## Soundscape

406 W. Cold Spring Lane  
Baltimore, MD 21210  
(410) 889-1134  
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## Audio Center, Inc.

4692 Fairmount Ave.  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 656-5100  
AUD, B&O, CAR, CHP, CRE, DWE, MCI, IL, PAX, PET, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VEL

## Audio Buys, Inc.

16512 South Westland Dr.  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877  
(301) 840-9180  
AES, ATL, ACT, AUD, CAR, DEN, HIT, JAM, KLI, KRE, LOV, M&K, MLN, MIR, MON, NEA, NHT, NIL, OMN, ONK, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, SHF, SND, SON, SNY, STE, TER, VAN, VID, XLO

## Soundworks

10534 Connecticut Ave.  
Kensington, MD 20895  
(301) 929-8600  
AUD, DAL, DEN, HAL, JBL, JVC, KIM, KIN, KLI, KRE, LOV, M&K, MIR, MON, NEA, NHT, NIL, OMN, ONK, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, SHF, SND, SON, SNY, STE, TER, VID

## Audio Buys, Inc.

14621 Baltimore Blvd.  
Laurel, MD 20707  
(301) 953-7242  
AES, ATL, ACT, AUD, CAR, DEN, HIT, JAM, KLI, MBO, MER, MSU, NIL, ONK, PIO, POL, PAX, RCA, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VID

## Gramophone Ltd.

10801 Tony Dr.  
Lutherville, MD 21093  
(410) 821-5621  
AVA, ADA, AMX, B&O, CHP, CRE, DAL, DEF, FAR, IMA, JVC, KIN, KLI, MCI, MIR, MAR, MCI, MON, MSU, NIL, OMN, PNC, PAX, PHA, PET, PLD, PIO, RAD, RAN, SHF, SOS, SYN, STE, TES, VEL, VID, YAM

## Myer-Emco

11611 Old Georgetown Rd.  
Rockville, MD 20852  
(301) 468-2000  
AUD, B&O, B&W, DEF, DEN, INF, MAD, MCI, MAR, MON, MSU, NIL, PDM, PIO, SON, SNY, STE, TOS, THE, VEL, YAM

## Audio Buys, Inc.

3360 Crain Highway  
Waldorf, MD 20603  
(301) 870-5333  
AES, ATL, ACT, AUD, CAR, DEN, HIT, JAM, JBL, KLI, MBO, MER, MSU, NIL, ONK, PIO, POL, PAX, RCA, RUN, SHA, SON, SNY, STE, TRI, VID

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**Likis** Audio: Birmingham.

**AR**- Custom Audio Video: Little Rock.

**AZ**- Jerry's Audio Video: Phoenix, Tucson.

**CA**- Access to Music: Larkspur • **Accurate AM**: S. Lake Tahoe.

**Audio Concepts**: Long Beach, San Gabriel • **Bay Area Audio**: San Jose.

**Boots Camera**: Fresno • **Christopher Hansen**: West LA • **Coast Entertainment**:

Atascadero, Santa Maria • **Creative Stereo**: Santa Barbara, Ventura.

**David Rutledge Audio**: Palm Desert • **DB Audio**: Berkeley • **Digital Ear**:

Tustin • **Dow Stereo Video**: San Diego & Suburbs, La Jolla, El Cajon, Chula Vista, Escondido • **Larson's**: Redding • **Lee's Home Theater**: Visalia.

**Monterey Stereo**: Monterey • **Pacific Coast A/V**: Newport Beach • **Paradyne**:

Sacramento • **Performance Audio**: San Francisco • **SpeakerCraft**: Riverside • **Systems Design**: Redondo Beach • **Videotek**: Westminster • **Westchester TV**: Bakersfield • **Wilson Home Theater**: Woodland Hills.

**CO**- **Audio Visions**: Grand Junction • **Listen Up**: Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs • **Soundtrack**: Denver & Suburbs, Boulder, Ft. Collins, Colorado Springs.

**CT**- Al Franklin's: Greenwich • **Carston's Audio Video**: Danbury.

**Roberts Audio Video**: New London.

**DC & Suburbs**: Myer-Emco.

**DE**- Sound Studio: Newark, Wilmington.

**FL**- **Absolute Sound**: Winter Park • **Audio Advisors**: W. Palm Beach.

**Audio Center**: Deerfield Beach • **Audio Video Store**: Tallahassee • **The Audiophile**: Vero Beach • **Cooper for Stereo**: Clearwater • **Hoyt Stereo**: Jacksonville • **Palm Audio**: Destin • **Sensuous Sound**: Tampa • **Sound Components**: Coral Gables • **Sound Ideas**: Gainesville • **Sound Insight**: Ft. Pierce • **Stereotypes**: Daytona Beach • **Stuart A/V**: Stuart.

**GA**- **Audio Warehouse**: Savannah • **Ken's Stereo Junction**: Macon.

**Laser Disc Enterprises**: Atlanta • **Merit TV**: Columbus.

**Stereo Connections**: Valdosta • **Stereo Festival**: Atlanta.

**HI**- **Audio Center**: Honolulu, Waipahu.

**IA**- **Audio King**: Cedar Rapids, Des Moines • **Audio Video Logic**: Des Moines • **Audio Visions**: Sioux City • **Archer Audio Video**: Ft. Dodge.

**Camera Corner**: Davenport • **Hawkeye A/V**: Iowa City, Waterloo.

**ID**- **Ultimate Electronics**: Boise • **Wise Buy**: Idaho Falls.

**IL**- **United Audio Centers**: Chicago & Suburbs • **Camera Corner**:

Bloomington • **Cars & Stereos**: Rockford • **Good Vibes**: Champaign • **Jon's Home Center**: Quincy • **Sound Forum**: Crystal Lake • **Select Sound**: Naperville • **Sundown A/V**: Springfield.

**IN**- **Classic Stereo**: Ft. Wayne, Mishawaka • **Good Vibes**: Lafayette.

**Kings Great Buys**: Evansville • **Ovation Audio**: Clarksville, Indianapolis.

**KS**- **Accent Sound**: Overland Park • **Advance Audio**: Wichita.

**Audio Junction**: Junction City, Manhattan.

**KY**- **Ovation Audio**: Lexington, Louisville.

**LA**- **Alterman Audio**: New Orleans, Metairie • **Lake Charles Music**: Lake Charles • **Sound Advice**: Baton Rouge • **Wright's Sound Gallery**: Shreveport.

**MA**- **Cookin'**: Chestnut Hill, Saugus • **Goodwins Audio**: Boston, Shrewsbury • **Nantucket Sound**: Hyannis • **Pittsfield Radio**: Pittsfield.

**MD**- **Gramophone**: Baltimore, Ellicott City • **Myer-Emco**: Gaithersburg, Beltsville, Rockville • **Soundscape**: Baltimore.

**ME**- **Cookin'**: Portland.

**MI**- **Pearls**: Detroit, Troy • **Classical Jazz**: Holland • **Classic Stereo**: Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids • **Stereo Center FRAV**: Flint.

**Court St. Listening Room**: Midland, Saginaw.

**MN**- **Audio King**: Minneapolis & Suburbs, Rochester, St. Cloud.

**Audio Designs**: Winona.

**MO**- **Independence A/V**: Independence • **Reference Audio**: Sedalia.

**Sound Central**: St. Louis.

**MS**- **Ideal Acoustics**: Starkville • **McLellan TV**: Hattiesburg.

**Players A/V**: Ridgeland.

**MT**- **Aspen Sound**: Missoula • **Avitel**: Bozeman • **Car & Home Stereo Center**: Billings • **Rocky Mountain Hi Fi**: Great Falls.

**NC**- **Audio Video Systems**: Charlotte • **Audio Visions**: Wilmington.

**Now Audio Video**: Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh, Winston-Salem.

**Audio Lab**: Wilmington • **Tri City Elect.**: Conover.

**NE**- **Custom Electronics**: Omaha, Lincoln.

**NH**- **Cookin'**: Nashua, Manchester, Newington, Salem, S. Nashua.

**NJ**- **Hal's Stereo**: Trenton • **Monmouth Stereo**: Shrewsbury • **Sound Waves**: Northfield • **Woodbridge Stereo**: West Caldwell, Woodbridge.

**NM**- **Ultimate Elect.**: Albuquerque • **Sound Ideas**: Albuquerque.

**NV**- **Ultimate Elect.**: Las Vegas • **Upper Ear**: Las Vegas.

**NY**- **Audio Breakthroughs**: Mahwah • **Audio Den**: Lake Grove • **Audio Expressions**: Newburgh • **Audio Junction**: Watertown • **Clark Music**, Syracuse • **Stereo Exchange**: Manhattan, Nanuet • **Hart Elect.**: Vestal • **Innovative Audio**: Brooklyn • **Listening Room**: Scarsdale • **Rowe Camera**: Rochester • **Sound Mill**: Mt. Kisco • **Speaker Shop**: Amherst, Buffalo.

**OH**- **Audio Craft**: Akron, Cleveland, Mayfield Hills, Westlake.

**Audio Etc.**: Dayton • **Classic Stereo**: Lima • **Paragon Sound**: Toledo.

**Threshold Audio**: Heath.

**OK**- **Ultimate Electronics**: Tulsa • **K Labs Premium Audio**: Tulsa.

**Photo World**: Bartlesville.

**OR**- **Bradford's HiFi**: Eugene • **Chelsea A/V**: Portland, Beaverton.

**Kelly's Home Center**: Salem • **Larson's**: Medford, Roseburg.

**Stereo Plant**: Bend.

**PA**- **Audio Junction**: Pittsburgh • **Gary's Elect.**: State College • **GNT Stereo**: Lancaster • **Hart Electric**: Blakely, Kingston • **Hi Fi House**: Abington, Broomall, Camp Hill, Harrisburg • **Listening Post**: Pittsburgh • **Palmer Audio**: Allentown • **Pro Audio**: Bloomsburg • **Stereo Shoppe**: Selinsgrove, Williamsport • **Stereo-land**: Natrona Heights • **The Stereoshop**: Greensburg • **Studio One**: Erie.

**RI**- **Stereo Discount Center**: Providence.

**SC**- **A/V Design**: Charleston • **Custom Theater & Audio**: Myrtle Beach.

**Upstairs Audio**: Columbia.

**SD**- **Audi King**: Sioux Falls • **Sound Pro**: Rapid City.

**TN**- **College Hi Fi**: Chattanooga • **Hi Fi Buys**: Nashville • **Now Audio Video**: Knoxville • **Modern Music**: Memphis • **Sound Room**: Johnson City.

**TX**- **Home Entertainment**: Dallas, Houston, Plano • **Audio Tech**: Temple, Waco • **Audio Video**: College Station • **Rock A/V**: Beaumont.

**Bunkley's Sd. Systems**: Abilene • **Bjorn's**: San Antonio • **High Fidelity**: Austin • **Krystal Clear**: Dallas • **Marvin Electronics**: Ft. Worth • **Sound Quest**: El Paso • **Sound Systems**: Amarillo • **Sound Town**: Texarkana.

**UT**- **Alpine Elect.**: Provo • **AudioWorks**: Salt Lake City • **Crazy Bob's**: St. George • **Stokes Bros.**: Logan • **Ultimate Elect.**: Layton, Murray, Orem, Salt Lake City.

**VA**- **Audio Connection**: Virginia Beach • **Audiotronics**: Roanoke.

**Home Media Store**: Richmond • **Myer-Emco**: Falls Church, Tyson's Corner, Fairfax • **Stereo Type**: Charlottesville.

**VT**- **Audio Video Authority**: S. Burlington.

**WA**- **Aspen Sound**: Spokane • **Definitive Audio**: Bellevue, Seattle.

**Evergreen Audio**: Silverdale • **Pacific Sight & Sound**: Wenatchee.

**Tin Ear**: Kennewick.

**WV**- **WA Sound Post**: Princeton.

**WI**- **Auditorium Emporium**: Milwaukee • **Absolut Sound & Vision**: Sheboygan • **Hi-Fi Heaven**: Appleton, Green Bay • **Sound World**: Wausau.

**Puerto Rico**- **Precision Audio**: Rio Piedras.

**Canada**- **A & B Sound**: Calgary, Edmonton, Kelowna, Vancouver & Suburbs, Victoria • **Advance Electronics**: Winnipeg • **Bay Bloor Radio**: Toronto • **Centre Audio Charest**: Trois Rivières • **CORA**: Quebec City • **Digital Dynamics**: Clearbrook • **Great West Audio**: London, Ontario • **Kebecson**: Montreal • **Lipton's**: New Market, Ontario • **Peak Audio**: Halifax • **Sound Room**: Vancouver • **StereoLand**: Windsor • **Treble Clef**: Ottawa.

**Mexico**- **Contact Grupo Volumen**: Mexico City.

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Cameras Inc.

860 Massachusetts Ave.  
Arlington, MA 02174  
(617) 648-8111  
ACR, HAR, NHT, PAN, POL, PRS, SHA, SON, SNY, VEL, YAM

### Ensemble Audio Vision

1060 Massachusetts Ave.  
Arlington, MA 02174  
(617) 648-4434  
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### Goodwin's Audio

870 Commonwealth Ave.  
Boston, MA 02215  
(617) 734-8800  
ATL, ACR, ACT, B&W, DEF, HAL, KIN, KLI, KRE, MON, NIL, RSS, SHF, SNY

### Media Systems

1 Design Center Pl., Ste. 625  
Boston, MA 02210  
(617) 439-7004  
ADA, AMX, AES, B&W, BRY, CIT, CHP, ENE, EXT, JAM, JBL, KLI, MAR, MCI, MLN, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

874 Commonwealth Ave.  
Boston, MA 02215  
(617) 728-4411  
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### Tweeter Etc.

30 Commerce Way, Rt. 6  
Seekonk, MA 02771  
(508) 336-3280  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

Burlington Mall  
Burlington, MA 01803  
(617) 273-2200  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

102 Mt. Auburn St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 492-4411  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SOS, SUN, TRI, VEL, XLO, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

The Mall, Rt. 9  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02167  
(617) 964-4411  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

Dedham Plaza, Rt. 1  
Dedham, MA 02026  
(617) 329-7300  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

86 Worcester Rd., Rt. 9  
Framingham, MA 01701  
(508) 879-1500  
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### Tweeter Etc.

1560 S. Woodward  
Birmingham, MI 48009  
(810) 642-9777  
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## Carfre Audio Video Systems, Inc.

2100 Washington St.  
Hanover, MA 02339  
(617) 871-8004  
ATL, CRE, DAL, FAR, JAM, MAR, MLN, NIL, RAN, RUN, SHA, STE, VEL, XLO

### Tweeter Etc.

1810 Washington St.  
Hanover, MA 02339  
(617) 648-4434  
DEN, KRE, M&K, MLN, MER, NIL, OMN, PAX, PDM, SHA, STS, TRI, VID, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

29325 Orchard Lake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334  
(810) 553-4360  
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### Tweeter Etc.

29325 Orchard Lake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334  
(810) 553-4360  
CHP, DEF, DEN, JVC, KEN, MCI, MON, NIL, OMN, PAX, PDM, SHA, SNY, SND, STS, STE, TOS, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

30 Commerce Way, Rt. 6  
Seekonk, MA 02771  
(508) 336-3280  
DEN, KEN, KLI, MAD, MIR, MON, MSU, NIL, PAN, PAX, PIO, PLD, POL, PRS, RCA, SHA, SNY, STS, VEL, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

351 Pleasant St.  
Northampton, MA 01060  
(413) 584-9547  
ACT, AUD, DEN, JVC, KEN, MCI, KRE, MAD, MON, NIL, ONK, RSS, SHF, SNY, STE, VEL, YAM

### Tweeter Etc.

3551 Orchard Lake Rd.  
Keego Harbor, MI 48320  
(810) 681-8509  
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Keego Harbor, MI 48320<br

# Bang & Olufsen

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TOS, VEL, VID, YAM

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SNY, YAM

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SON, SNY, STE, TOS, VEL, VID,  
YAM

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STE, TAR, THI

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SNY, VEL

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TOS, YAM, ZEN

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SUN

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615 327-4312

210 828-3237

713 524-1956

512 687-1181

817 927-5311

801 272-5241

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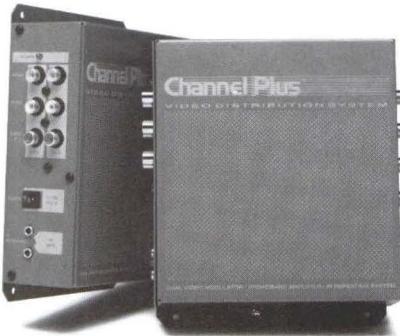
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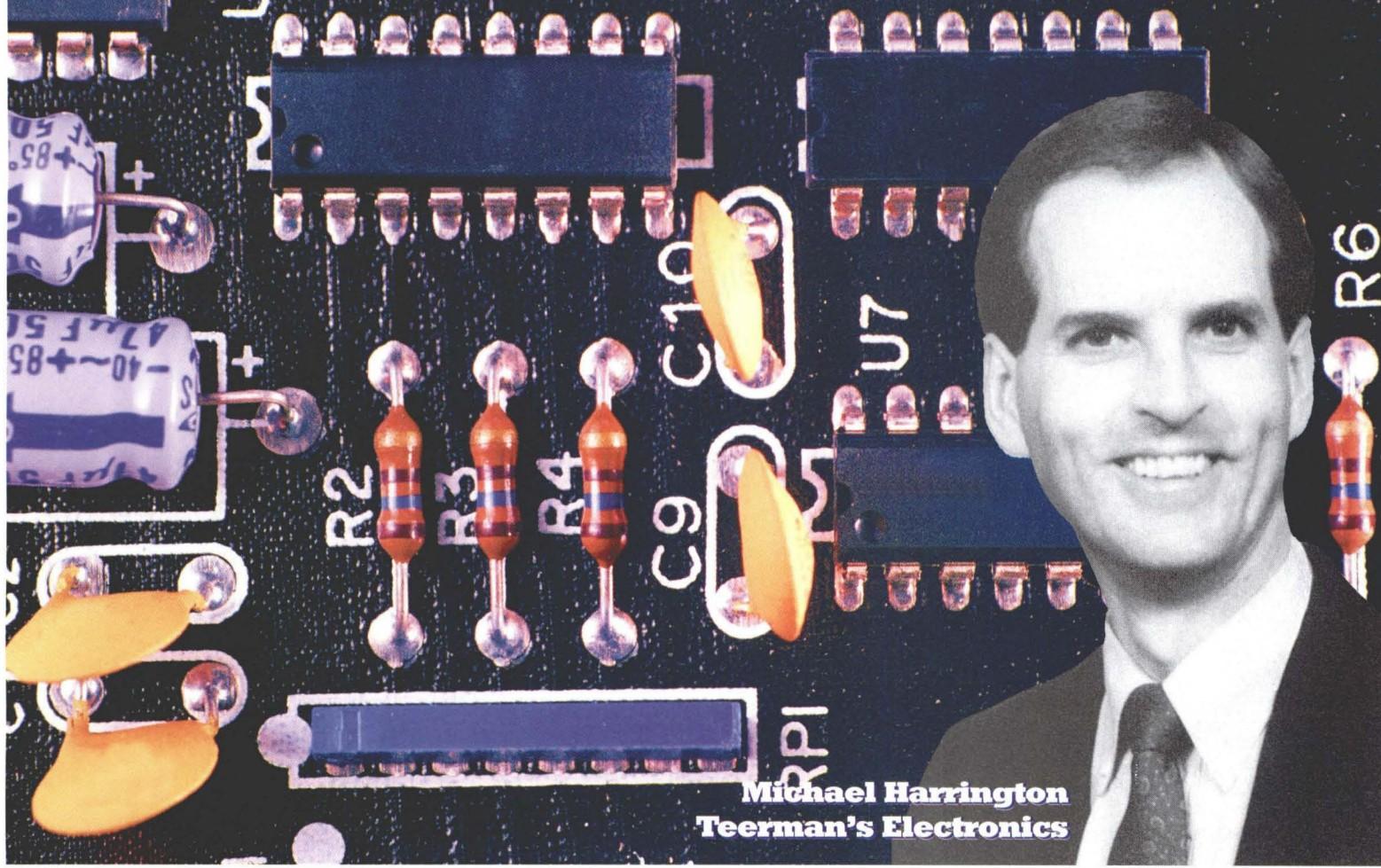
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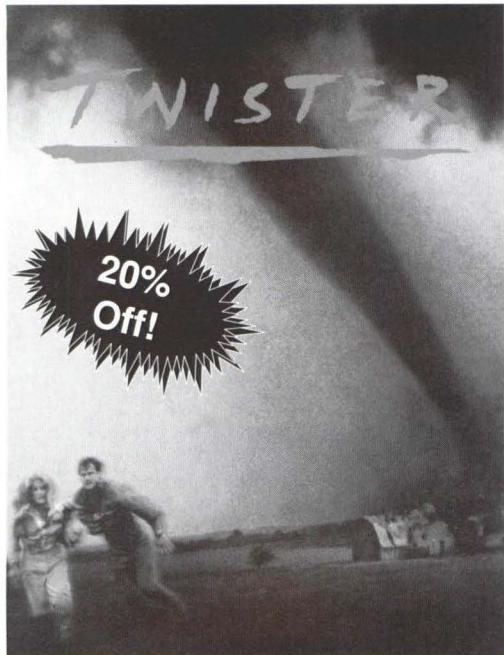
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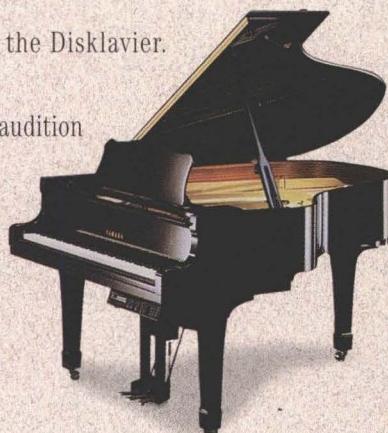
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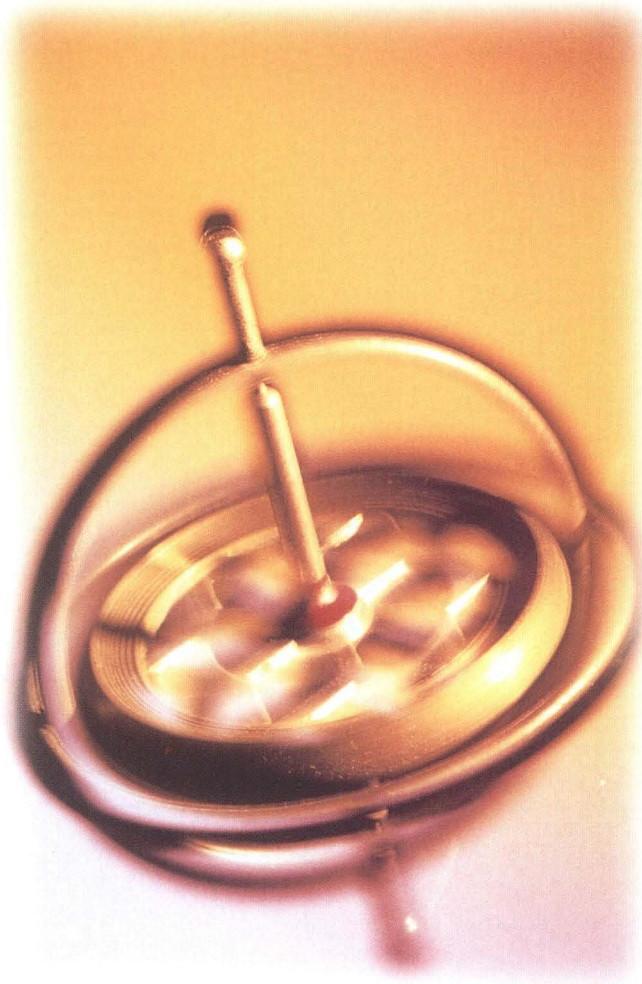
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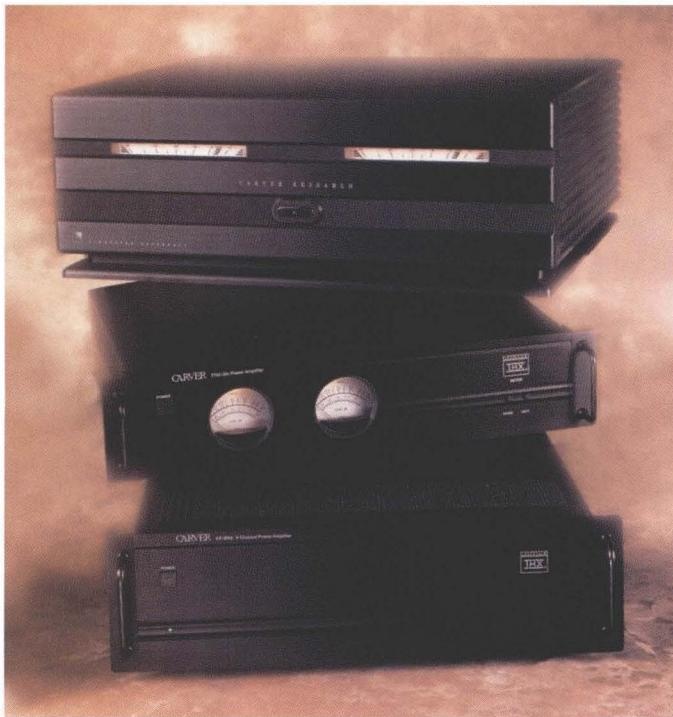
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Printed in the United States.

# Make enough trouble and people always start talking



At Carver, we've found that making trouble is usually the first step in making real audio progress. For nearly twenty years we've built audio components around controversial design concepts in order to break through traditional price/performance barriers.

The three amplifiers shown here continue that tradition. The awesome Lightstar Reference is our most articulate technical statement ever as well as Carver's blueprint for the future. The lessons we learned during its development are now common denominators for every Carver amplifier design. As a result, people are talking about the latest Carver amplifiers in terms usually reserved for far more expensive models, such as "innovative," "powerful," and even "magic."

To achieve this level of performance, technology and value in a single precision chassis, we design and build these amplifiers in our own factory just outside Seattle, Washington. Hear the technology that has the experts talking at your authorized Carver dealer.

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## Carver Research Lightstar Reference Amplifier

Recommended Component, Stereophile, April 1996  
(Vol. 19, No. 4)

"Innovative, powerful (350 Wpc) power amplifier that impressed RD [Robert Deutsch] with its dynamics and sense of power in reserve, while sounding impressively neutral."

## Carver TFM-35x THX Amplifier

Stereophile Guide to Home Theater, Fall 1996  
(Vol. 2, No. 3), Robert Deutsch

"It's very modestly priced but doesn't sound like it...There are two groups of audiophiles to whom I particularly recommend the TFM-35x: those who are drawn to the tonal qualities of tube amplifiers but don't want the responsibility of their care and feeding, and those who are attracted to the sound of the Carver Lightstar Reference but deterred by the price...In the right system, it can give the big boys a good run for their money."

## Carver AV-806x Multi-channel Amplifier

Recommended Component, Stereophile, April 1996  
(Vol. 19, No. 4)

"I was expecting competent performance; what I got instead was magic,' enthused TJN [Thomas J. Norton] about the six-channel Carver...  
'My favorite current multichannel amp.'

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Coming in the November  
*Home Theater*!!

### Definitive Technology's New Towers!!

We just can't get too much of a good thing. Def Tech has improved upon the BP-2000 speaker system that Brent awarded a Hot Ticket to in the November '95 *HT*. Now, hot off the press is Brent's review of the brand-new BP-2002 speaker system. Will he gush uncontrollably about the improvements? Probably. But find out for sure in the next issue of *Home Theater*!!

### Subs Woof Off!

Join our editors as they converge once again in the dank, stuffy *HT* listening studios to eat hot dogs and listen to a big batch of subwoofers. Only Al, Brian, and our Price-Waterhouse representative know which sub will win and which will take its place as the official *HT* paperweight. We'll break the seal on the envelope just in time for the next issue and reveal the winner of *HT*'s semi-annual subwoofer Face Off! Who will laugh—and who will cry?

### Is This the End...

Of remote control clutter? Marantz thinks their new \$250 RC-2000 learning remote will replace all your universal remotes, clearing off your coffee table in the process. We're not sure that just getting rid of the remotes that don't work will be enough to clear off *our* coffee tables, but we can't wait to fire up this baby in our listening studio. *HT*'s Gear Guide continues in the November issue with a review of what we hope will be a ground-breaking new product.



### MACK

#### Halloween

This was our favorite holiday as children and remains so today. It's one of those low-stress occasions that only serve as an excuse to eat more candy and watch scary movies. Come to think of it, we do that anyway, so it's really just like any other day. Hmmm.

### WACK

#### Being Too Old to Trick or Treat

Now, there's no law stopping us from going out on Beggars' Night, but an unaccompanied 30-year-old in a clown costume is bound to draw some puzzled stares from parents and children alike. And we don't want to scare anyone, so we'll just stick to buying candy at the drugstore. But it's still wack!

### MACK

#### Metallica

With acts like Bush and Silverchair dominating the charts, rock radio's turned into a medium for the Barbie 'n' Skipper set, instead of the Harleys 'n' Wild Turkey set. But along come the kings of speed metal with an alternative to alternative: a real rock CD. If Mötley Crüe would just rehire Vince Neil and do some more videos with strippers, the world would be back on track again.

### WACK

#### The H.O.R.D.E. Tour

The world really needs a Lollapalooza Lite? For those of us who grew up on summer megaconcerts featuring parent-unapproved acts like Black Sabbath, Ted Nugent, and Judas Priest, seeing Blues Traveler and Natalie Merchant share a double bill brings a tear to the eye and a yawn to the throat. Oh well, at least we've still got sex and drugs to fall back on.

### MACK

#### The \$800 32-inch TV

Only three years ago, a good big-screen TV cost at least \$1,500. But you can now get great big-screen direct-view TVs at a price practically anyone can afford, so the man of modest means no longer has to settle for loss-leader junk just to get a picture big enough for the whole family to watch. We've seen plenty of excellent Toshiba, Hitachi, and Panasonic models advertised at this price (or lower); if you're still suffering with an old 20- or 25-inch screen, it's high time you upgraded.

### WACK

#### The \$600 Home Theater System

Attempting to make the BIG SALE so they can capture an extra half-grand, many mass-market A/V dealers now throw together really wack sound systems to "complement" those \$800 big-screens. Problem is, the sound system's usually nothing more than a junky A/V receiver and a really, really bad set of speakers from some company that was a big name 20 years ago, but whose current product line is so low-rent even Chinese factories are too proud to build it.

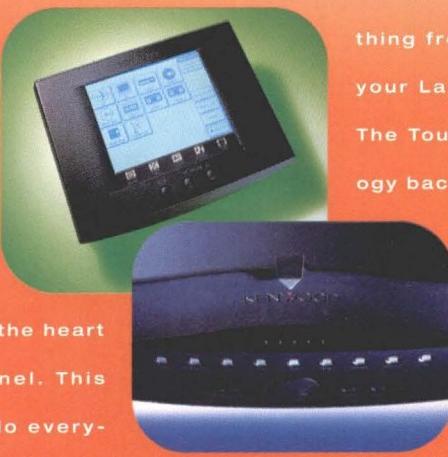
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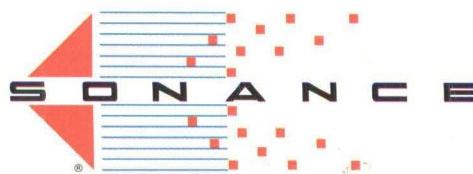
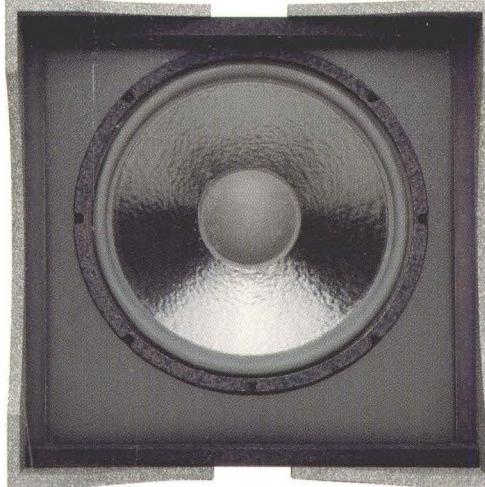
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# *Finally Subwoofers That Love Music And Video*



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Experts agree there is no other subwoofer on the market that solves the basic problem with subwoofers today...And that is "How am I supposed to set my subwoofer, for music or for video?" Now, Sonance has the solution, a subwoofer designed for both movies and musical selections. Sonance set out to build the best subwoofer for music and video, and we accomplished it with our DuaLevel® Series. The new DuaLevel subwoofers maximize performance by featuring two separate volume controls — one for music and one for movies that can be switched automatically.\* Reproduce the subtleties in music and the ground-shaking effects from today's state of the art motion picture soundtracks, without having to adjust the subwoofer.

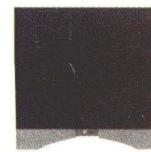


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Join listeners around the world and audition a Sonance DuaLevel subwoofer today. Demand the new standard in powered subwoofers.



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125 Watt Power Amplifier  
30 to 140Hz ±3dB

**DL800**

DuaLevel Technology  
8" Active • 10" Passive  
90 Watt Power Amplifier  
35 to 140Hz ±3dB

\*Optional VT1 source selector may be required.